



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Determined Admissions Arrangements for 2025/26.

Date: 24 January 2024

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1 .

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Executive Director for Children and Young People
Director of Law, Governance and Elections

Outline and recommendations

This report seeks the Mayor and Cabinet's approval for the local authority's admissions arrangements for the academic year 2025/26. There are two changes to the previous arrangements, which have been consulted on during the period 27 November 2023 to 12 January 2024.

These proposed changes are;

- A decrease in the Published Admissions Number (PAN) at both Deptford Park Primary School from 90 to 60.
- Amendment to the admissions policies for mainstream community school to give preference to children of staff members.

The report's appendices A-I set out the following arrangements:

- The admissions policy for mainstream community nursery, primary, secondary schools and sixth forms for academic year 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A to G ;
- the pan London admissions schemes for the planned reception and secondary transfer rounds for academic year 2024/25 in Appendix I;
- the locally coordinated in year admissions scheme for academic year 2025/2026 in Appendix E
- The Published Admissions Number (PAN) for all community mainstream schools for the academic year 2025/26 in Appendix H.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

In accordance with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021, admission authorities must, if they wish to make any changes to the existing admissions arrangements, consult for a minimum of six weeks.

For the 2025/26 round of admissions the Local Authority consulted on the proposed changes from 27 November 2023 to 12 January 2024, and the responses are highlighted within the report.

The arrangements for 2025/26 must be determined no later than 28 February 2024.

1. Summary

- This report's appendices A to I sets out details of the:
- Local authority's admissions policy for community schools for the academic year 2025/26.
- Pan London admissions schemes for the planned reception and secondary transfer rounds for academic year 2025/2026.
- The locally coordinated in year admissions scheme for academic year 2025/2026.
- Published Admissions Number (PAN) for all community mainstream schools for the academic year 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Mayor and Cabinet is asked to approve:

- The admissions arrangements for mainstream community nursery, primary, secondary schools and sixth forms for academic year 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A to G.
- The Published Admissions Number (PAN) for each community mainstream school in the borough for academic year 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix H.
- The pan London Admissions Schemes for reception and secondary transfer and a local scheme for in year admissions for academic year 2025/2026 as detailed in Appendix I.

3. Policy Context

3.1 The School Admissions Code, revised and published in May 2021, amended the formal consultation and annual determination timetable. In accordance with this time table, admissions authorities are required to determine their arrangements no later than 28 February 2024 for the policy which applies to school admissions for the 2025/26 academic year.

3.2 Once determined, the admissions arrangements must be published no later than 15 March 2024. Any objections to the determined arrangements must be made to the Office of the School Adjudicator by 15 May the same year.

3.3 Lewisham local authority is the admissions authority for community schools in the area.

It also acts as the coordinating authority for its residents applying during the planned admissions rounds for mainstream schools both within the area and outside the area. In relation to in-year applications Lewisham acts as the coordinating authority for applications to most mainstream schools in the area too.

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Lewisham's relevant area has been determined as the administrative area for the London Borough of Lewisham.

The operation of a fair and equitable system for the admission of children to school supports Lewisham's corporate priority to raise educational attainment, skills levels and employability. The admissions arrangements for the planned and in year rounds ensure that children, particularly vulnerable groups and especially Children in Public Care, have a fair, transparent and timely admission into school.

This report contributes to the delivering of Lewisham's Corporate plan for 2022-26, supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham. We will do this by:

- creating and maintaining schools in Lewisham that are ambitious and achieving, where children are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential,
- encouraging children and their parents to be empowered, responsible and actively involved in their local school and wider community and
- Enabling children to go onto further education, take up employment or training at the end of their statutory education.

4. Background

4.1 Education Act 2002

The Education Act 2002 required all local authorities to introduce coordinated schemes for primary admissions with effect from 2006 and secondary admissions with effect from 2005. These schemes enable parents to express a maximum of six mainstream preferences of a maintained school which, although ranked by parents, are treated equally by the schools involved. This widens the choice for parents and pupils and tackled the problem of multiple offers which previously clogged the transfer system. Lewisham participates in the Pan London Admissions scheme which facilitates cross-border applications and sharing of information amongst all 33 London boroughs and five local authorities bordering the capital; Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Essex and Thurrock. Since September 2010 London boroughs have operated a Pan London scheme for both primary (reception) and secondary transfer and, since 2016 admissions, infant to junior applications too. This impacts on resources both in terms of staffing and demand on the pan London Register (the computer system used to electronically exchange applicant details and admissions decisions).

4.2 A revised School Admissions Code (Code) came into force in May 2021. The Code no longer requires a mandatory centrally coordinated in-year admissions scheme. However, Lewisham has maintained the view that this function should continue to be centralised for mainstream schools including own admission authority schools as it ensures:

- a safeguard for all children, especially those who are vulnerable, ensuring that they are placed in school without unreasonable delay; and
- A strategic overview on the demand for school places so that any pressure can be addressed without delay to children's education.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation ran from 27 November 2023 to 12 January 2024 with the following responses received.

The consultation included Kelvin Grove School's proposal to reduce its PAN from 90 to 60 for the Reception Planned Round 2025/26, as in 2022/23 the intake was lower than usual, and the governing body were concerned about fewer numbers ongoing. Going

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forward this has not been the case and the school feel in a strong position to maintain a PAN of 90. This proposal has now been withdrawn.

The consultation also included introduction of children of staff as a priority criteria. There has been no objection to this proposal and we therefore plan to include this. Schools have expressed a strong preference for this criteria.

- 5.2 As such the proposals to Mayor and Cabinet are in line with the responses to the consultation.

6. Published Admissions Number (PAN)

- 6.1 Each mainstream school is required to set a Published Admissions Number (PAN) specifying the number of places available at the normal point of entry that is for reception places in primary, infant or junior schools and Year 7 places at secondary school.
- 6.2 There is a proposal to formally reduce the Published Admissions Number (PAN) within a Lewisham maintained school. A reduction from 90 to 60 at Deptford Park Primary School. Additional, schools will agree to cap numbers on an informal basis as and when required.
- 6.3 These reduction follow on from the continued review and revision of pupil forecasts, which over the last few years have been revised downwards, resulting in both a current and projected oversupply of places in both primary and secondary schools. As such, the council has been working with schools on a number of ways in which we can help support those that are particularly effected, to certainty of pupils on roll and allow efficient use of resources. This also includes implementing local caps in schools with an excess of places. It should be noted that all schools which have reduced have agreed that should the need arise for further places in the future that they will play their part in ensuring sufficient places are available.
- 6.4 Over the past few years we have reduced PANs where needed in primary and secondary schools and are now in much more stable position. Locally reducing PAN's has worked well to keep sufficient places available but not to have unnecessary excess. We will continue to have ongoing dialogue with those schools with spare places about how best to help them on an individual school by school basis. It is anticipated that further restrictions of places will be necessary over the coming years at a rate of circa 30-60 places per annum. We are aware neighbouring local authority schools are currently consulting on PAN reductions.

7. Admissions Arrangements

- 7.1 Changes are proposed to the mainstream community schools admissions policies to provide preference places to children of staff members. Priority to children of staff will be given only where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. The member of staff must be employed on at least a 0.6 full time equivalent (FTE) basis and employed directly at the school (rather than through an agency or third-party organisation). Priority of admission will only be given for the community school at which the member of staff is working. The number of places offered under this criterion will be limited to a maximum of one place per Form of Entry (FE) at each school.
- 7.2 The rationale: The 2021 Admissions Code (paragraph 1.39) allows admissions authorities to give priority to children of staff in either or both of the following

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circumstances:

- a) Where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or
- b) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

7.3 **Areas for consideration:**

- The Royal Borough of Greenwich is consulting on the inclusion of children of staff, as a priority criterion for community school for 2025/26.
- The London Borough of Bexley uses children of staff as a criterion for its primary community schools. All its secondary schools are academies.
- The London Borough of Lambeth currently uses children of staff criterion for its community schools.
- The London Borough of Croydon do not have children of staff as a criterion.
- The London Borough of Bromley has no community schools.

7.4 **Pros**

- The introduction of children of staff could act as a recruitment and retention strategy in Lewisham.
- Many Lewisham staff live out of borough and schools report that they lose valuable staff where their child is not able to be offered a school place.
- Staff work harder and are more committed to a school where their children attend.
- Governors and the SLT would welcome the addition of children of staff as a priority to negate associated costs and impact on the school, particularly in the recruitment crisis.
- Lewisham community schools would be on a level playing field with other boroughs.

7.5 **Cons**

- There is no requirement on Local Authorities /schools to adopt such a priority,
- Local children may be disadvantaged by being placed in a school further from their home address if children of staff are given priority.
- Children who obtain a place at the school under the children of staff priority may disadvantage local children in the future, if their siblings are also given priority. However, this is a sibling rule that applies to all children.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no direct implications for the General Fund arising from the proposals in this report. For the individual schools, the reduction in PAN numbers should provide the schools with certainty within which to operate and develop their appropriate school level budget plans and Deficit Recovery Plan /Deficit Prevention Plans (if applicable).

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 The recommendations in this report, for the Council's admission arrangements for mainstream community nursery, primary, secondary schools and sixth forms to be determined by the required date, are in accordance with the provisions of section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended) (SSFA), the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), School Admissions (Infant Class Size)(England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admission Code (revised in May

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2021). This statutory framework governs the Council's statutory duty as an admission authority to make arrangements in relation to the allocation of school places including the overall procedure, practices, criteria, and supplementary information that are used to decide the allocation of school places.

- 9.2 The report and its appendices that detail the Council's admission arrangements comply with the relevant provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021 (The Code) by ensuring that:

Oversubscription criteria is reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation.

Arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs.

Admission arrangements for entry in September 2025 will be determined by 28 February 2024; and

Once admission arrangements have been determined the local authority is required to notify appropriate bodies and publish a copy of their determined arrangements on their web site as soon as possible before 15 March 2024 and displaying them for the whole offer year.

- 9.3 The Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them to have 'due regard' to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- 9.4 In making their decision Mayor and Cabinet must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 The purpose of the School Admissions Code is to ensure that places in maintained schools and Academies are allocated and offered in an open and fair way. Admission Authorities must ensure that criteria are fair, clear and objective. This includes ensuring that parents are easily able to understand how places for a particular school will be allocated.

- 10.2 Admission authorities must act in accordance with the Code, the School Admissions Appeal Code, and other laws relating to admissions and relevant human rights and equalities legislation. Authorities must also ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational need' (Code, paragraph 1.8)

- 10.3 Lewisham's arrangements comply with these requirements and vigilance is embedded in our processes. Any instances of poor practice may be challenged and referred to the School Adjudicator if necessary.

11. Climate change and environmental implications

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11.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

12. Crime and disorder implications

12.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

13. Health and wellbeing implications

13.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

14. Environmental implications

14.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

15. Background papers

15.1 [School Admissions Code 2021](#)

15.2 [Education Act 2002](#)

16. Report author and contact

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17. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and Elections

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