



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Determined Admissions Arrangements for 2026/27

Date: 29 January 2025

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1 .

Ward(s) affected: All

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

Outline and recommendations

This report seeks the Mayor and Cabinet's approval for:

- The local authority's admissions arrangements for the academic year 2026/27.
- Revised arrangements from 2024/25 and 2025/26. The revisions are as a result of feedback from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator after applying for an in year variation.

The arrangements for the academic year 2026/27 were consulted on during the period 29 October 2024 to 10 December 2024.

These proposed changes are:

- The reduction of the Published Admissions Number at Elfrida Primary School to 30.
- The reduction of the Published Admissions Number at Launcelot Primary School to 30.
- The admissions policy for all mainstream community nursery schools and classes, primary and secondary schools and sixth form.
- The reduction of the in-year Published Admissions Numbers at Deptford Park Primary School, Rangefield Primary School, Forster Park Primary School, Lancelot Primary School.
- The coordinated schemes for transfer to primary and secondary school.
- The locally coordinated in year admissions arrangements to participating mainstream schools and academies.
- The planned admissions limits for all community mainstream schools.

The admissions arrangements for 2024/25 and 2025/26 revisions relate to:

- Primary school admission
- Junior school admission
- Secondary school admission
- Admission of sixth form
- Omissions from the arrangement
- The reduction of the in-year Published Admissions Numbers at Forster Park Primary School to 45.

The remainder of this reports set out the following arrangements for 2026/27:

- The admissions policy for mainstream community nursery, primary, secondary schools and sixth forms for academic year 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1.
- The pan London admissions schemes for the planned reception and secondary transfer rounds for academic year 2026/27 in Appendix 2.
- Lewisham's scheme for the coordination of in-year admissions for maintained schools and academies in lewisham 2026/27 Appendix 3.
- The locally coordinated in year admissions scheme for academic year 2026/27 in Appendix 4.
- The Published Admissions Number (PAN) for all community mainstream schools for the academic year 2026/27 in Appendix 3.

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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 2026/27 round of admissions the Local Authority consulted on the proposed changes from 29 October 2024 to 10 December 2024, and the responses are highlighted within the report.

The arrangements for 2026/27 must be determined no later than 28 February 2025.

1. Summary

This report's appendices set out details of the:

- Local authority's admissions policy for community schools for the academic year 2026/27.
- Pan London admissions schemes for the planned reception and secondary transfer rounds for academic year year 2026/27.
- The locally coordinated in year admissions scheme for academic year year 2026/27.
- Published Admissions Number (PAN) for all community mainstream schools for the academic year year 2026/27.
- Revised Admissions Arrangements from 2024/25 and 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 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1.
- The Published Admissions Number (PAN) for each community mainstream school in the borough for academic year 2026/27.
- Revision of the admissions arrangements for 2024/25 and 2025/26 is highlighted in arrangements for 2026/27) relate to:
 - Primary school admission
 - Junior school admission
 - Secondary school admission
 - Admission of sixth form
 - Omissions from the arrangement
 - The reduction of the in-year Published Admissions Numbers at Forster Park Primary School to 45.
 - The pan London Admissions Schemes for reception and secondary transfer and a local scheme for in year admissions for academic year 2026/.27.

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 2025 for the policy which applies to school admissions for the 2026/7 academic year.

3.2 Once determined, the admissions arrangements must be published no later than 15

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March 2025. Any objections to the determined arrangements must be made to the Office of the Schools 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.

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

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addressed without delay to children's education.

We have a legal duty to ensure that every child has a school place and need to plan to ensure that we have capacity for this. However, we must also ensure the financial viability of every school and pupil numbers are critical to determining the funding of a school.

Across London, there has been a reduction in pupil numbers because of falling birth-rates, changes to EU migration (Brexit), the impact of COVID, and associated with housing, families relocating to places outside of London. Lewisham and surrounding boroughs (Bromley, Greenwich and Southwark) are not immune to this, and this is reflected by the growing number of surplus places available at our schools.

The situation is acute in primary schools and specifically at Reception.

The Lewisham primary roll dropped by over 100 pupils across all year groups in the last year. This has contributed to surplus places across all primary schools in all year groups totalling over 9 per cent. We know from accurate forecasting that we expect this surplus to continue to rise if no action is taken.

In the context of increased financial pressures and falling rolls, many schools are experiencing financial difficulties. The impact of this financial pressure is that the quality of the educational experience for children and young people may be compromised. This is because a reducing budget impacts on staff numbers which then potentially impacts on the diversity and depth of the curriculum offer.

For each planning area we will consider all possible options available to effectively manage surplus places. These include reducing the Published Admission Number (PAN), maximising pupil numbers, making better use of school sites with spare capacity and vacant premises managers houses, including children with SEND and collaboration and federation to achieve economies of scale.

Schools in Lewisham have, in recent years seen an overall reduction in planned admission numbers. This approach has helped to gradually reduce the number of excess places across the borough and has meant that Lewisham, unlike a number of other London boroughs, has not had to respond to the reduction in pupil numbers by closing schools. We will continue to monitor this situation.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation ran from 29 October 2024 to 10 December 2024 and included the following:

- The proposal to reduce in-year published admission number (PAN) at the schools named in 5.2 Table A.
- The proposal to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at the schools named in 5.3 Table B.
- The coordinated schemes for transfer to primary and secondary school.
- The locally coordinated in year admissions arrangements to participating mainstream schools and academies.
- The planned admissions limits for all community mainstream schools.

5.2 Table A – In year admission PAN

Name of school	Year group	Current PAN
Deptford Park Primary School	Reception: 45	60
Deptford Park Primary School	Y1 - 4: 45	60
Deptford Park Primary School	Y5 - 6: 60	60

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Rangefield Primary School	Reception: 30	30
Rangefield Primary School	Year 1 - 6: 30	60
Forster Park Primary School	Reception: 45*	60
Forster Park Primary School	Year 1: 30	30
Forster Park Primary School	Year 2: 45*	60
Forster Park Primary School	Year 3: 50*	60
Forster Park Primary School.	Year 4: 40	40
Forster Park Primary School.	Year 5: 50	40
Lancelot Primary School	Reception: 30	60
Lancelot Primary School	Year 1: 30	60
Lancelot Primary School	Year 3: 30	60

*This PAN accommodates vertical class arrangements.

5.3 Table B – Planned rounds (starting school)

Name of school	Proposed reduction	Current PAN
Elfrida Primary School	30	60
Deptford Park Primary School	30	60
Lancelot Primary School	30	60

5.4 The following responses received.

- 5.4.1 Please can we change the advice around all-through schools to say that once they accept or decline an offer in March they cannot then randomly decide to stay at the home school if they change their mind about moving to a different secondary school? I.E. tighten up the need for students to only hold one offer like everyone else?

New paragraph added to state:

If a child is attending an all-through school accepts an offer at an alternative school (as one of their preferences), the assumption will be that they no longer require the place at their all-through school, unless the parents indicate otherwise, the place will be offered to a child from the school's waiting list in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria.

- 5.4.2 Can we make it clear that applications for admission to Year 7 which are received after 1 September 2025 should still go to Lewisham Admissions, and then from 1 January, may be made directly to schools which are their own admissions authority?

Additional wording added to 2026/27 admissions arrangements to state:

Applications for admission to Year 7 and Year R which are received after 1 September 2026 for the Lethersellers Federation Schools (Prendergast Ladywell School, Prendergast School, Prendergast Vale School) will continue to be processed by Lewisham Admissions. From 1 January the applications should be directed to the school

- 5.4.3 Can we get rid of the requirement of a letter from Headteachers for deferred Y7 and Y12 entry for summer born children when they are going to be staying within their cohort?

Lewisham cannot accommodate this request, as headteachers (where schools are the own admission authority) must decide whether to accommodate an out of cohort request. This is because there is no legal requirement for a school to accommodate a child who is currently being educated out of cohort and is able to place a child back in

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their natural year group without an agreement.

- 5.5 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 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.
- 6.3 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. Revision to admission arrangements 2024/25 and 2025/26

Due to recent feedback from the Office of Schools Adjudicator the local authority has made the following amendments to its arrangements:

- **A clearer determined admissions policy 2024/25 and 2025/26** by ensuring that all relevant documents are presented in a more parent friendly way, so that parents can look at the admissions arrangements and understand easily how places for community schools are allocated.
- **Primary school admission** by amending the third oversubscription. The oversubscription criteria was amended to clarify the position of applicants if the school was oversubscribed with siblings. The medical/social criteria was removed in oversubscription criterion 3 as those children would already been allocated under criterion 2. The new amended states that priority will be given to those permanently living closest to the school.
- **Junior school admission** by rewording the ranking. The amendment was made to clearly define the oversubscription criteria for Lewisham community schools giving the highest priority to looked after and previously looked after children.
- **Secondary school admission** by amending the determined admissions arrangements for Conisborough College 2024/25 onwards. As Conisborough College is no longer a Lewisham community school it has therefore been removed from the admissions arrangements.
- **Admission of sixth form** by revising expectations for external candidates. The amendments clearly define Lewisham's requirement to publish the number of places expected to be available to students not on roll of Forest Hill and Sydenham

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School. For SFH6 it is expected that a maximum of 10 places per school (20 in total) will be available to children attending other schools.

- **Omissions from the arrangement** by including children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and tie breakers. The amendments clearly explain that children with an EHCP will be admitted before the application of the oversubscription criteria for each school, if the EHCP names the school. The tie-break arrangements have been expanded to explain the process so that it is clear to parents how community school places are allocated in a tie-break situation.

8. Admissions arrangements

8.1 Areas for consideration:

- Surrounding boroughs (Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth and Southwark) are seeing a decline primary pupil numbers and therefore have taken steps to reduce in-year PANs and in some cases close undersubscribed schools.
- Some schools with declining numbers are considering vertical classes and sharing of resources but this is not sustainable long term.
- Lewisham in collaboration with the schools will have to consider a longer-term strategy if Lewisham Primary school numbers continue to decline in line with current forecast.

8.2 Pros:

- Lewisham community schools would be on a level playing field with other boroughs.
- Schools can better manage their deficit budgets, where applicable.
- There are sufficient school places within the local areas, to absorb these reductions.

8.3 Cons:

- Local children may be disadvantaged by being placed in a school further from their home address if local PANs are reduced.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The report notes the local authority's statutory requirement to ensure sufficient school places for children and young people of statutory school age.

As in other London councils, Lewisham is experiencing a reduction in pupil numbers in the primary phase. Many local authorities are undertaking actions such as managing PAN numbers (or even school closures) to reflect the fall in numbers which is a major risk in London)

Reduction in PAN/capping allows a school to have certainty around the number of pupils and respond with a suitable staffing structure. For example, if numbers in a year group exceed required class size of 30, even by one or two pupils, the school would need to operate with two teachers for that class. This would generate a budget pressure. The PAN reductions noted in this report are at the request of the relevant school.

From a financial risk perspective, fewer children mean there is a lower contribution to the operational costs of the building. For this reason, the financial position would need to be closely monitored to ensure that the schools remain wholly viable.

Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, members need to be mindful that there could be consequential implications if a school is not able to set

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a deficit recovery plan (not able to cover their costs and results in a structural deficit), with the potential possibility of pressure on the General Fund. To mitigate this, schools finance and the school improvement service are working with individual schools to support them with short, medium and long term financial planning.

Supplementing this work there is a wider policy on school place planning which is considering the longer term sufficiency for all schools

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 A local authority has a general duty under Chapter III of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires local authorities to exercise their functions so as to promote the participation of young people aged 16-18 in education and training.
- 10.2 Statutory guidance (the School Admissions Code, published in January 2021) sets out the requirements imposed on a local authority relating to school admissions.
- 10.3 The School Admissions Code and the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-Ordination of Admission Arrangements (England) Regulations 2012 set out detailed requirements for consultation on proposed changes to school admission arrangements. Consultation must take place when changes are proposed, or every 7 years if no changes have been proposed. The Council has conducted the required consultation as set out in this report.
- 10.4 In exercising its functions a local authority must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups. A local authority must also make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the 'best value duty').
- 10.5 The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.

11. Equalities implications

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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).
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 Consideration of impact of the consultation to reduce PAN based on the demographics of the affected schools. The average for the Black Minority Ethnic group across Lewisham is 62.5%. At Deptford Park School: 92.12%, Elfrida: 81.56%, Forster Park: 80%, Lancelot: 68.67% and Rangefield: 74.77%. Gender reflects the rest of the

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borough at approximately 50% male and female. By reducing the PAN we are safeguarding these schools but ensuring there are sufficient school places within the local community.

12. Climate change and environmental implications

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

13. Crime and disorder implications

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

14. Health and wellbeing implications

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

15. Environmental implications

- 15.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

16. Background papers

- 16.1 [School Admissions Code 2021](#)

- 16.2 [Education Act 2002](#)

- 16.3 [The School Admissions \(Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

17. Report author and contact

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

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