



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: John Bigley,
Manager, Admissions & Access

Tel: 0114 2734097

Report of: Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services

Report to: Education, Children & Families Policy Committee

Date of Decision: 8th February 2024

Subject: School Admission Arrangements for the 2025/26 Academic Year

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2498				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				

Purpose of Report:

As the "Admission Authority" the Local Authority is responsible for determining admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools each year. Consultation must take place once every seven years where there are no changes, or whenever there are significant changes proposed to existing arrangements.

The arrangements were last consulted upon for the 2023/24 academic year. There are no significant changes so there has not been any further consultation for 2025/26. Even where there has been no consultation, the arrangements must still be determined by 28 February 2024.

This report seeks approval to determine the proposed admission arrangements for 2025/26, including the oversubscription criteria and co-ordinated admission schemes for primary and secondary schools.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to approve:

1. The oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2025/26 (including for external Sixth Forms)
2. Proposed Admission Numbers for 2025/26
3. The statutory Primary and Secondary co-ordinated admission schemes for 2025/26

as set out in this Report.

Background Papers:

The Local Authority complies with the statutory Admission Code of Practice [School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Admission Numbers 2025
- Appendix B - Coordinated scheme for Primary Schools 2025 / 2026
- Appendix C - Coordinated scheme for secondary schools 2025 / 2026

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>Kayleigh Inman</i>
		Legal: <i>Nadine Wynter</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>Bashir Khan</i>
		Climate: <i>n/a</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Andrew Jones</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllrs. Dawn Dale</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: John Bigley	Job Title: Manager, Admissions & Access, Education & Skills
	Date: 23/01/24	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 require that all admission authorities **must** determine their admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following school year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years. Even if the admission arrangements are not consulted upon, they must still be “determined” for each academic year.

Sheffield Local Authority is responsible for determining admission arrangements for all its Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. It is not responsible for admission arrangements at schools that are their own admission authority such as Academies, Voluntary Aided, Trust and Foundation schools.

The Authority publishes its Admission Arrangements and those of all other maintained schools and academies annually in its composite prospectus “A Guide for parents”.

- 1.2 The Oversubscription Criteria

All Admission Authorities must publish criteria which explain how places will be allocated if a school is oversubscribed. The oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools are:

(i) Priority One

Children in Care or Previously in Care (Statutory Requirement)

All Admission Authorities **MUST** prioritise the admission of Looked After Children and all previously looked after children within their admission criteria. These children are defined as: “a child who is looked after by a local authority in accordance with section 22B of the Children Act 1989 and who (a) is looked after at the time an application for admission to a school is made and (b) in relation to whom the local authority has confirmed that the child will still be looked after at the time when the child will be admitted to the school.

The Authority, in its capacity as Corporate Parent, will work closely with parents and carers of Looked After Children, or previously looked after children to ensure that the most appropriate school is made available that can best meet the needs of the child.

The following is required of faith schools:

Admission authorities for faith schools may give priority to all Looked After Children and previously looked after children whether or not of the faith.

They must however give priority to Children in Care and previously in care of the faith before other children of the faith.

Where the admission authority for the school also provides for the admission of pupils not of the faith, then priority shall be given to a relevant looked after child and previously looked after child not of the faith over another child not of the faith.

Children in Care or Previously in Care – Admissions outside the normal admission round.

In accordance with the Regulations described above, Looked After Children and previously looked after children after will be prioritised for admission at their preferred school when an application is made for other year groups under the Authority's statutory Fair Access provisions.

Looked After Children who were previously in state care outside of England

The Authority will also extend this priority to Looked After Children who were previously in state care outside of England so that they will be treated on an equal footing to those children looked after and previously looked after by a local authority in England.

(ii) Priority Two

Attendance at the linked Infant School – Separate linked infant and junior schools only

This category applies to the transfer from Year 2 to Year 3 at separate linked Infant and Junior Schools. Priority will be afforded for places at the Junior School to children who have attended the designated linked infant school and whose parents apply for a place there. Whilst children attending linked infant schools will be prioritised after those in category one above, admission cannot be guaranteed. In the event of oversubscription, normal admission priorities (i.e. those at (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) will be applied.

Children living in the catchment area for a separate junior school who apply for a place there but do not attend the linked infant school will be considered **after** any child that does attend the linked infant school.

The "sibling" priority will be afforded if a sibling attends either the infant or linked junior school.

(iii) Priority Three

Catchment area with Sibling

Children who normally reside with a parent or person with parental responsibility in the defined catchment area and who will have a brother

or sister at the preferred school on the day of admission will be considered next, except for admission to separate junior school as described in (ii) above.

The definition of a sibling for these purposes is given at (v) below.

This means that all catchment & sibling applications are prioritised before catchment applicants irrespective of distance. The normal distance tie-breaker will apply within each category.

(iv) Priority Four

Catchment Area

Children who normally reside with a parent or person with parental responsibility in the defined catchment area but will not have a sibling at the preferred school at the point of admission will be considered next.

In the event of oversubscription, tiebreakers will be used as described below.

(v) Priority Five

Non-Catchment Siblings

Whether in category (iii) or (v), a sibling is defined as a child who permanently or usually lives at the same address as:-

a brother and/or sister

a stepbrother and/or stepsister (to include half-brother/sisters)

and in both cases will be attending the preferred school at the point of entry. Where the requested school is a separate infant or junior school, attendance at the linked junior school or infant will be included.

In circumstances where an older sibling attends a school sixth form, Sibling priority will only be afforded if the older sibling attended the school prior to Y12.

(vi) Priority Six

Contributory Feeder Primary School (Year 6 to Year 7 only)

Applicants for a Year 7 place whose children attend a designated feeder primary school but do not fit into any of the above categories, (iv), (v) or (vi) above will be considered next. (Secondary Schools only)

Parents are advised in the Composite Prospectus "A Guide for Parents" that if they choose to send their children to a non-catchment primary school, they have a lower priority for entry to the linked secondary school and that there is no guarantee of a place there.

(vii) Priority Seven

All other applicants

Any applicant who does not fall into one of the above categories will be considered next.

Service Personnel and Crown Servants

In accordance with 2.21 of the School Admissions Code of Practice 2021, for families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, the Authority will:

- a) allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area provided that the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria. The Authority will not refuse a service child a place because the family does not live in the area at the time of application.

1.3 Tie Breakers

For any admission category that is oversubscribed there are two stages of further consideration.

A. *Exceptional medical, social or special educational needs*

Where exceptional medical, social or special educational needs are demonstrated and supported by a written statement from a professional, an application may be prioritised by the Admission Committee (AC) but only within its admission category. It is the parent's/applicant's responsibility to provide supporting evidence.

The parent/applicant must supply sufficient supporting evidence from relevant professionals at the time of the original application, for the Authority to consider whether an individual case constitutes exceptional circumstances to be prioritised. In any event, the evidence must support the view that the child must attend the school applied for and that they could not have their needs met at any other school.

Applications will only be submitted to the Admission Committee for further consideration if they are accompanied by third party supporting evidence.

B. Distance

In circumstances where exceptional circumstances are not demonstrated, the final tiebreaker will be the distance from the home

address to the school building. This is a straight-line measurement from the home address to a designated point of the school building.

Where the remaining place could be made for a number of children living equidistant from the school the determination of the single offer will be made by random allocation:

The random allocation will:

- i) be independently supervised by a representative of the City Council's Admissions Team.
- ii) take place on a date and time notified in advance to the participating parents so that they can attend as witnesses.

1.4 Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

The Authority is required to co-ordinate all applications for Sheffield residents applying for a place in the "normal year of entry" – i.e. Reception, Year 3 (Separate Junior schools) and Year 7.

This means that a parent residing in Sheffield completes the Common Application form, expressing up to a maximum of three preferences and the Authority liaises with schools and other local authorities on their behalf. The Authority must agree schemes for co-ordinating admissions which are appended to this report.

The Local Authority will inform the parent of the outcome of their application, including the reason for the refusal and information on the appeals process if a place is refused at any of their preferred schools. Decisions will be communicated on the national allocation day which is 16 April for Reception and Year 3 and 1 March for Year 7. If either date falls on a weekend the allocation date will be the following Monday.

The Authority has determined co-ordinated admission schemes as required by law for the 2025/26 academic year. **(App. B & C)**

1.5 Waiting Lists

A waiting list will be maintained until 31 December 2025 for transfer to separate junior schools (Year 3) and transfer to secondary schools (Year 7). A waiting list will continue to be maintained for the full academic year for admission to Reception, i.e. until 31 August 2026. The waiting list must be ranked in line with the published oversubscription criteria.

1.6 School to School Transfers

Some schools experience a higher volume of transfers than others. To help support schools manage higher numbers they will have the option of offering a place at the beginning of the next half term and operate induction days. Each case must however be considered on its own merits. Children may often reasonably remain at their current school until the transfer takes

place. A child must not however miss any education as a result of a place not being made available.

There is not a statutory requirement to co-ordinate in-year admissions. All Sheffield schools have however agreed to participate in a co-ordinated scheme that is administered by the Local Authority. There is a clear process for considering in-year applications and this means that all parents are treated equitably, and the Authority can continue to undertake its safeguarding responsibilities especially on behalf of any child not on a school roll.

2.0 Entry Outside the Normal Year Group

2.1 Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year 1. Details on the procedure for requesting admission out of year are provided in the Composite Prospectus.

2.2 Any decision to educate a child outside the normal year group lies with the individual School. Such decisions **must** be made on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. They **must** also take into account the views of the head teacher of the school concerned. When informing a parent of their decision on the year group the child should be admitted to, the admission authority **must** set out clearly the reasons for their decision.

3.0 Proposed Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

3.1 All Admission Authorities are required to set an admission number which confirms the number of available places at the first year of entry. There is a reduction in pupils numbers entering Reception and the Authority is undertaking a City-wide strategy to support schools through this for the foreseeable future.

The City is experiencing a fall in birth rate and this is reflected in the number of applications being received for some schools. The Authority is supporting schools through the Falling Rolls Strategy. One strand of the strategy is for schools to operate temporary lower admission numbers to enable them to plan resources more efficiently.

The proposed Admission Numbers for 2025/26 are provided at **Appendix A**.

There are proposed reductions at:

School	Designation	Admission Number	Proposed Admission Number
Birley Spa Primary	Academy	60	45*
Concord Junior School	Academy	60	45*
Deepcar St. John's Junior	Voluntary Aided	73	60*
Pipworth Primary	Community	75	60*
Rainbow Forge Primary	Academy	54	45*
Reignhead Primary	Community	60	45*
Wincobank NI	Academy	60	45*
Windmill Hill Primary	Academy	54	30*

*Ongoing reductions

4. **Proposed Sixth Form Admission Arrangements for 2025/26**

- 4.1 The Local Authority is responsible for determining arrangements for the admission of external student to sixth form at King Edward VII Community School. Proposed oversubscription criteria are set out below.

Exceptional Circumstances

Where the Admission Authority intends to admit pupils from outside the school to Year 12 (The Sixth Form), the admission arrangements should include an admission number for those that would be admitted to the school for the first time, together with details of entry requirements. It is not necessary for pupils already attending the school to apply for places in Y12, but they should be informed that the objective criteria should be met. The Local Authority co-ordinates the admissions process for external students who wish to apply for a place in Sixth Form (Year 12).

In order to progress into Sixth Form a minimum level of attainment is expected, normally at least 5 subjects at Grade 4 to 9 including English and Mathematics. Some subjects require additional entry requirements.

Places for external students wishing to apply for a place in King Edward VII 6th Form will be prioritised as follows assuming that the student is anticipated to achieve the minimum entry criteria:

1. Looked After or previously looked after

2. Exceptional circumstances
3. All other students

The tie-breaker within each category is distance from home to school.

All other 6th form schools are Academies and may operate different oversubscription criteria for admission to 6th form for external students. The individual Academies are responsible for determining admission arrangements.

Academies operating Sixth Forms are as follows:

Astrea Academy
All Saints Catholic High
Forge Valley Academy
High Storrs Academy
King Ecgbert Academy
King Edward VII Academy
Meadowhead Academy
Mercia Academy
Notre Dame Catholic High
Sheffield Park Academy
Silverdale Academy
Tipton Academy

5. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 5.1 In 2014/15 the Authority conducted a comprehensive City wide review of its current admission arrangements. The review considered responses from all major stakeholders including parents, young people and school leaders. The overwhelming response was that catchment areas, designated feeder schools, and priority for siblings to attend the same school remained popular and the oversubscription criteria reflect this.
- 5.2 The oversubscription criteria described at 1.2 help the Authority consistently deliver a higher rate of positive preferences than the national average. The catchment area and feeder school arrangements support local communities and prioritise children for places at their local schools, also helping families attend school together.
- 5.3 Academies are free to set their own Admission oversubscription criteria but the majority have retained the Council's catchment area based model. This ensures a City wide approach to Admissions as opposed to a fragmented system that could be to the detriment of parents and children.

6. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

6.1 The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 require that all admission authorities **must** determine their admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following school year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years. Even if the admission arrangements are not consulted upon, they must still be “determined” for each academic year.

6.2 The Local Authority consulted on its Admission Arrangements for the 2023/24 academic year. As there are no proposed changes and in line with the requirement outlined in paragraph 3.1 above, the Local Authority has not consulted on its Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 but must nonetheless still “determine” its arrangements.

7. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

7.1 Equality Implications

7.1.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and highlights that the admission system remains a catchment area based system. The statutory requirement to prioritise the admission of looked after and previously looked after children is included within the Authorities oversubscription criteria. This category has been extended to include children who were looked after arriving from outside the UK. The criteria for oversubscription are objective and applied equitably. There is provision within the process to recognise any social, medical or educational issues on a case by case basis.

Parents understand and trust the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. Most Academies follow the Council policy to provide City wide consistency.

7.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

7.2.1 There are no financial or commercial implications to this report.

7.3 Legal Implications

7.3.1 The Authority is legally obliged to formally determine its admission arrangements by 28 February 2024. The legal requirements are contained in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended, and the School Admission (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

7.4 Climate Implications

7.4.1 There are no climate implications to this report.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 The Admissions Review was a City-wide consultation which asked whether the current admission arrangements were still supported and were still fit for purpose. There continues to be a high level of support for the current arrangements and the current arrangements continue to deliver a high level of preferences met.

For the 2023 intakes for example a total of 95.34% were offered their first preference primary schools compared to a national average 92.5%. A total of **99.08%** were offered one of their three preferred schools. For Year 7 admission to Secondary school 88.46% were offered a preferred secondary school compared to a national average of 82.6%. A total of **96.29%** were offered one of their three preferred schools.

9. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The recommendation to approve the proposed admission arrangements for 2025/26 will ensure that the Authority carries out its statutory duty to consult and determine its admission arrangements for the 2025/26 academic year, including:

1. The oversubscription criteria (Including external Sixth Forms)
2. The proposed Admission Numbers
3. The statutory Primary and Secondary co-ordinated admission schemes.

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