

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION 20 FEBRUARY 2026**

### **SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR 2026/27, CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES 2026/27 & PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER CHANGES FOR 2026/27**

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#### **Relevant Cabinet Member**

Councillor Dr Stephen Foster

#### **Relevant Officer**

Director of Children's Services

#### **Relevant Local Members**

Councillor Nik Price – Bromsgrove West

Councillor Sam Ammar – Bromsgrove South

#### **Recommendation**

**1. The Director of Children's Services recommends that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:**

- (a) approves the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2027/28 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b;**
- (b) approves the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2027/28 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b, the in-year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2026/27 in Appendix 2c;**
- (c) approves the Published Admission Numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2027/28, as set out in Appendix 3;**
- (d) approves the existing catchment area for Millfields First School Appendix 4d; with no changes supported;**
- (e) approves the Fair Access Protocol for Worcestershire Schools with immediate effect, as set out in Appendix 5; and**
- (f) approves the updated Local Authority Maintained Nursery Admissions Policy for 2026 onwards, as set out in Appendix 6**

#### **Background**

2. In March 2014, Cabinet agreed that where no significant changes are proposed to the school admission arrangements, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has delegated authority for approving the Schools Admissions Policy for

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and schemes for Co-ordinated Admissions in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has therefore approved the arrangements on an annual basis.

3. In January 2020, Cabinet reviewed and approved changes to those arrangements, including extending the delegated authority of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to include approving the admission arrangements as a whole (meaning policy, Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and co-ordinated schemes) as well as the introduction of an In-Year co-ordinated scheme and a new Fair Access Protocol.

4. There are no significant changes proposed to the 2027/28 Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, and no PAN changes. The arrangements were subject to full public consultation and require Cabinet Member approval for the academic year 2027/28.

### **Review of the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2027/28**

5. The School Admissions Team undertook full public consultation in line with the statutory requirements of section 1.45 of the Code on School Admissions. This included direct mailing to all schools in Worcestershire, neighbouring local authorities, Diocesan Boards, Trade Unions, and libraries. The information was also published on the School Admissions website. An advertisement was published in all the local papers alerting parents to the information on the website and directing them to locations where hard copies could be viewed, if required. The consultation was also shared on social media. Consultation took place between 20 October 2025 and 30 November 2025. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 7.

6. There was a proposed amendment to the current approved policy in order to provide clarity to parents on how applications in cases of shared care will be dealt with, the revised wording now includes specific reference to how this will be done as set out below:

*“Where parents/carers have shared responsibility, the home address will be the address where the child normally lives for the majority of the school week. We consider the school day to be during term time only. We consider a child to be resident overnight on the following days to constitute a school day: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. You will need to satisfy us that your child is resident with you overnight for the majority of these days during term time, in order to accept your address. If the evidence you provide does prove 50/50 shared care across the above days, over a period of a month, we will use random allocation to determine which address to use. Legal and Governance Services, who are independent of School Admissions will supervise this process.”*

7. As there are no significant changes recommended, responsibility for approving the arrangements remains with the Cabinet Member in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the academic year 2027/28, attached as Appendices 1a and 1b.

## Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for 2027/28 and In-year Scheme for 2026/27

8. The School Admissions Code Section 2.20 states:

*"Each year Local Authorities must formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools within their area. Where the scheme is not substantially different from that adopted in previous years there is no requirement to consult."*

9. There are no changes to the closing and offer dates (see table below), with only minor amendments to the exchange of information dates with other admission authorities.

	<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Offer Date</b>
<b>Primary/Middle</b>	15 January 2026	16 April 2026
<b>Secondary</b>	31 October 2025	1 March 2026

10. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes for primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2027/28 as set out in Appendices 2a & 2b.

11. The In-Year co-ordinated scheme for in-year admissions for 2026/2027 remains unchanged from the scheme approved for 2025/2026.

12. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for In-Year admissions as set out in Appendix 2c.

### **Published Admission Number (PAN) Changes**

13. Worcestershire County Council Sufficiency and Place Planning Team keep under review the PAN for all community and voluntary controlled schools and consults with Governing Bodies annually to ensure there are sufficient places in an area for the number of pupils seeking to attend their local school.

14. Admission Authorities are no longer required to consult on an increase to the PAN if the school has sufficient accommodation. This change was introduced by the revised Code on School Admissions in December 2014.

15. There are no proposed PAN changes for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2027/28.

16. The following Academy and Voluntary Aided Schools, who are their own admission authorities, have conducted public consultation on proposals to reduce PAN as set out in the table below:

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Current PAN</b>	<b>Proposed PAN</b>	<b>Justification</b>
Hallow CE Primary School	Martley	30	29	School accommodation works not yet completed

Oasis Academy Warndon	Worcester	90	60	Falling pupil numbers in school, which is not financially sustainable.
St Bartholomew's CE Primary	Stourport	50	30	Falling pupil numbers in school which is not financially sustainable.
Stanley Road	Worcester	45	30	Falling pupil numbers in school which is not financially sustainable
Stourport Primary	Stourport	45	30	Falling pupil numbers in school which is not financially sustainable
The Stourport High School & Sixth Form	Stourport	254	210	Falling pupil numbers in school which is not financially sustainable

17. A full assessment of school provision within the areas has been conducted to assess the ability of schools to continue to meet the forecast demand for places. The County Council seek to maintain a 5% surplus of places across an area to allow for in-year admissions or unexpected increases.

18. The Council has reviewed the current and expected future demand for places at the schools proposing to reduce PAN and have confirmed for each proposal that the reduction in places will not cause a concern for sufficiency of mainstream school places.

19. As Academy and Voluntary Aided Schools the Trust/Governing Body are responsible for the decisions to reduce PAN, this is reported for information purposes by the Cabinet Member.

20. There are no proposed changes for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2027/28, it is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the PANs for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2027/28 as set out in Appendix 3.

### **Proposal to revise the catchment area for Millfields First School**

21. The Governing Body of Millfields First School, Bromsgrove requested that consultation take place on expanding the current shared catchment area with Charford First School.

22. The Governing Body believed that by increasing the size of the shared catchment area this would support Millfields First School in ensuring parents are aware they could apply for either school and ensure that both schools can maintain sustainable numbers of pupils.

23. The area Governors propose becomes a shared area, lies almost equidistant between Millfields First School and Charford First School, and they believe that families in this location would have genuine schooling options without additional travel burdens. Governors believe that both schools and the wider community would benefit from a more balanced distribution of pupils.

24. This proposal was included in the public consultation conducted in line with the statutory requirements of section 1.45 of the Code on School Admissions and is attached as Appendix 4a..

25. The school level forecast for Millfields First School based on known number of pupils on roll is as follows:

<b>Estimate October</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2025</b>	45	53	48	59	58	<b>263</b>
<b>2026</b>	49	46	53	48	59	<b>255</b>
<b>2027</b>	37	50	46	53	48	<b>234</b>
<b>2028</b>	45	38	50	46	53	<b>232</b>

26. Housing growth in the current catchment area for Millfields First School is forecast to generate the following additional pupil numbers in the area:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>2025</b>	4	3	2	2	2
<b>2026</b>	10	8	6	6	5
<b>2027</b>	17	16	14	11	11
<b>2028</b>	23	21	19	15	14
<b>2029</b>	23	21	19	15	14
<b>2030</b>	23	21	19	15	14
<b>2031</b>	23	21	19	15	14
<b>2032</b>	23	21	19	15	14
<b>2033</b>	23	21	19	15	14

27. Based on the school's previous intake percentages, Millfields First School could expect to receive 50% of the additional pupils generated from the new housing shown above. Millfields First School can realistically expect pupil numbers to increase as a result of the housing growth within their existing catchment area boundary in line with the table below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2025</b>	47	55	49	60	59	<b>270</b>
<b>2026</b>	54	50	56	51	60	<b>271</b>
<b>2027</b>	45	58	53	59	56	<b>271</b>
<b>2028</b>	57	49	60	54	60	<b>280</b>

28. A full assessment of school provision within the area has been conducted to assess the ability of schools to continue to meet the forecast demand for places. The County Council seek to maintain a 5% surplus of places across an area to allow for in-year admissions or unexpected increases.

29. The current evidence shows that numbers of children in the existing catchment area for Millfields First School are forecast to grow with new housing developments.

30. The table below shows the number of pupils entering Reception intake in Bromsgrove, for the last few years.

School Name	PAN	First Preferences 2024	First Preferences 2025	First Preferences 2026
Catshill First	60	45	45	45
Charford First	90	86	70	63
Dodford First	15	10	4	7
Fairfield First	30	39	36	27
Finstall First	60	59	72	48
Hanbury CE First	30	37	36	33
Lickey End First	30	28	29	34
Meadows First	60	72	105	87
<b>Millfields First</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>44</b>
The Orchards School	60	20	26	33
St Peter's Catholic First	60	41	26	25
Stoke Prior First	30	34	32	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>471</b>

31. Based on first preference data, across Bromsgrove First Schools in 2024 and 2025 Reception intake there was a surplus of just under 12%, this rises to a surplus for 2026 Reception intake of almost 20%.

32. The Code on School Admissions 2021 allows admission authorities to set their oversubscription criteria to determine how places will be allocated if a school is oversubscribed. Catchment area is allowed by the Code, and if a catchment area forms part of the admission arrangements, it must be designed so that it is reasonable and clearly defined. Parents must be able to clearly look at the admission arrangements for any school and clearly understand how those arrangements will be applied to their child. Where a school is undersubscribed, the oversubscription criteria is not relevant as all applicants must be offered a place.

33. Parents are entitled to express preferences for any school they wish their child to attend. Parents are not restricted in having to apply for their catchment area school and often chose to apply for schools outside of their catchment area. Extending or sharing a catchment area with another school, does not make it more likely for parents living in the area to apply for the school/s. A number of schools do not use catchment area in their admission arrangements.

34. Parental preferences result in children moving across catchment boundaries across the Bromsgrove area. Millfields First School Reception intake for September 2024 comprised of 54% from within the existing catchment and the majority of the other 46% living across other areas in Bromsgrove, particularly in Charford First and The Orchards catchments. Parents living outside of the catchment area for Millfields First School are already applying for places at the school. The current evidence shows that the existing catchment boundary is not a barrier to parental preference.

35. Millfields First School is not currently oversubscribed, the current catchment area boundary is not required to be used, all children that require a place in the school can be offered. The new housing development is predicted to see the number of children resident in the current catchment area increase; it is likely that in future the oversubscription criteria will have to be applied. By increasing the size of the existing catchment area, this will mean more children living in the new catchment area. Should the school become oversubscribed, this could mean children residing in the new housing development, might not be successful in obtaining a place at the school. This is because of the geographical straight-line distance used in the admission arrangements. The existing housing in the proposed shared catchment area that currently forms the Charford First School catchment is in part, closer to Millfields First School than the new housing development in Millfields First School catchment area. The impact of this may mean children from the new housing development having to travel beyond Millfields First School, to go to schools further away.
36. Two consultation responses on the proposal were received, one from the Governing Body of Charford First School, Appendix 4b, and the second from Worcestershire Hills Trust, the Multi Academy Trust responsible for Charford First School, Appendix 4c.
37. The Governing Body of Charford First School do not support the expansion of a shared catchment area between Millfields First School and Charford First School.
38. Charford First School believe the proposal would impact their ability to fill for the following reasons:
- a) There are already a number of children in the Charford First School catchment area that chose to attend schools elsewhere, including catholic schools, which already impacts their ability to fill to PAN.
  - b) They are concerned that the proposed new shared area represents a more affluent area of their community and are concerned that any change could impact the characteristics of their cohort, in turn impacting their resources and support for disadvantaged pupils.
  - c) There is a new housing development planned and started on Whitford Road, which is in the current catchment area for Millfields First School. This will see an increase in numbers in the current catchment area of Millfields First School over time. Charford First School do not believe that families from that area will want to walk the distance from the new estate to Charford First School and are likely to apply for Millfields First School. Increasing the shared area now may impact the families in the new housing estates ability to secure a place in their local school Millfields First in future.
  - d) Millfields First school have already received Section 106 developer contributions to support their infrastructure to be ready for the new housing development. Any change to the catchment area now, could impact Millfields First Schools ability to provide for the new housing estate
39. For clarification, Millfields First School did receive Section 106 developer contributions back in 2016 which assisted the school in expanding to a 2-form entry school and to support their capacity to deliver Universal Infant Free School Meals. The school have not received any further Section 106 contributions. As it was not accurate, this specific point of concern has not been taken into consideration.

40. Worcestershire Hills Trust responded to the consultation to advise they do not support the proposal as it presents a potential risk to the stability of Charford First School and the proposal has not demonstrated the need to alter the existing arrangements for the same reasons as set out by the Governing Body of Charford First School.
41. The principles used by the Local Authority when determining a catchment area for a school are listed below
- a. A balance of demand against the number of places to ensure, as far as possible, pupils living in an area will be able to secure a place at their local school
  - b. A close geographical relationship to the new school to avoid young children having an unnecessarily long journey or having to travel through another school's catchment area to reach their own school. Recognition will be given to the current statutory walking distances of 2 miles for pupils under 8 years of age and 3 miles for pupils aged 8 or older.
  - c. Avoidance of shared areas
  - d. Use of recognised geographical boundaries such as rivers, canals, railways and main roads. It may include parish boundaries which define local communities
  - e. Travel routes that encourage walking, as far as possible avoid crossing busy roads and mainly pass through residential areas
  - f. A mix of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds
  - g. Following existing pupil movements
  - h. The desirability of keeping dwellings with the same post code within the same catchment area.
42. The proposed catchment change could be detrimental to Charford First, which as with other Bromsgrove schools, has also experienced falling numbers. Based on the principles the Local Authority follows, in order to balance the demand for places against the number of places forecast due to new housing, to ensure a close geographical relationship for the new housing development to the school, to avoid small children travelling unnecessarily long journeys, to avoid creating further shared catchment areas and lack of clarity for parents, by continuing to use the main road as the catchment boundary, avoiding children crossing main road routes, and encouraging walking to school, taking into account keeping the same boundary continues to reflect the ability of pupils out of catchment to apply for the school, supporting in part existing pupil movement patterns; until such time that the school becomes oversubscribed, the evidence shows that the existing catchment boundary is not a barrier to parental preference, it is therefore recommended that;
43. The Cabinet Member approves the recommendation to maintain the existing catchment area arrangements for Millfields First School as set out in Appendix 4d.

### **Fair Access Protocol**

44. The school admissions code places a statutory responsibility on all Local Authorities (LA) to have a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) which all schools in their area comply with, to ensure that all unplaced students, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a suitable school place without unnecessary delay.

45. The proposed Protocol has been co-produced with existing Fair Access Panels and is similar to the current Protocol. The proposed change to the Protocol is in relation to the weighting system currently used.
46. The weighting system is a tool used to ensure every school participates and takes its fair share of children admitted under the protocol. It is used where consensus decisions cannot be reached. The proposed Protocol removes the inclusion of in-year admissions from the weighting system. The proposed Protocol seeks to weight only those children admitted or leaving schools, that are permanent exclusions, off-site directions, managed moves or were placed using the Protocol. The weightings points are proposed to be revised for those categories. The aim is to ensure that all schools are measured from a level starting point, rather than subject to in-year movement which can fluctuate quite significantly from school to school. It also reflects the higher level of support schools are putting in place for a successful transition of children in the remaining categories.
47. There has been no response received to the consultation on the proposed changes.
48. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the Fair Access Protocol for Worcestershire Schools with immediate effect as set out in Appendix 5.

### **Local Authority Maintained Nursery Admission Arrangements**

49. The nursery admission arrangements for Local Authority Maintained Nurseries have remained unchanged following approval by Cabinet with effect from 2014. Although the School Admissions Code does not relate to Nursery Admissions, WCC has continued to hold a Local Authority Maintained Nursery Admissions Policy. It is proposed to update the policy in line with changes to early years eligibility.
50. The proposed changes have been co-produced with a representative group of LA maintained nursery leaders. The proposed changes include giving priority for children of staff and moving sibling criteria higher up the over-subscription criterion.
51. There has been no response received to the consultation on the proposed changes.
52. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the Local Authority Maintained Nursery Admission Arrangement with effect from September 2026, as set out in Appendix 6.

### **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

53. The local authority is required to comply with The School Admissions Code (“the Code”) which applies to admissions to all maintained schools in England. The Code is statutory having been *“issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 and imposes mandatory requirements including guidelines setting out aims, objectives and other matters in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions by bodies listed below:*

- a) Admission authorities of maintained schools as defined in Section 88(1) (a) and (b) of the SSFA 1998*
- b) Governing bodies and local authorities (when not admission authorities)*
- c) Schools Adjudicators*

*d) Admission Appeal Panels.*

*These bodies have a statutory duty to act in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Code.”*

54. It is the responsibility of the admissions authority to ensure that admission arrangements e.g. the overall procedure, practices, criteria and supplementary information to be used in deciding the allocation of school places are compliant with the Code to ensure that all school places for maintained schools are allocated and offered in an open, clear, objective and fair way. Parents should be able to look at the admission arrangement and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.

55. Admission authority must determine admission arrangements annually and where changes are proposed must publicly consult on those arrangements between 1 October and 31 January. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish.

There are no financial and HR implications that will occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments**

51. An Equality Impact Assessment relevance screening has been completed on the Admission Policy for 2027/28. It shows that the recommendations do not have an adverse impact on children and young people or any of the protected groups and promotes equality.

52. There are no Public Health and Privacy Impact Assessment implications that will occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Risk Implications**

53. The delivery and consequences of the recommendations have been considered and there are no risk implications that are likely to occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Supporting Information (available electronically only)**

- Appendices 1a & 1b - Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools
- Appendices 2a & 2b & 2c - Co-ordinated Schemes for Worcestershire Schools
- Appendix 3 – Published Admission Numbers
- Appendices 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d – Millfields First School Catchment Area maps and responses to the proposal to amend catchment area
- Appendix 5 –Fair Access Protocol for Worcestershire Schools
- Appendix 6 – Local Authority Maintained Nursery Admission Arrangements
- Appendix 7 - Consultation letter

### **Contact Points**

Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[School Admissions Code](#)  
[Cabinet Papers 30 January 2020](#)