

Report Title:	Determination of School Admissions Arrangements 2025-26
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No – Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Amy Tisi, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Windsor
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet, 20 th February 2024
Responsible Officer(s):	Lin Ferguson, Executive Director Children’s Services and Education
Wards affected:	All wards

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REPORT SUMMARY

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough and sets the admissions arrangements for these schools.

The School Admissions Code 2021 (“the Code”) requires the borough to consult on the arrangements where significant changes are proposed and determine the arrangements for 2025/26 on or by 28th February 2024. The admissions authority is proposing two relatively minor changes requiring consultation: a) the extension of the designated area for Riverside Primary School (Maidenhead), and b) the reduction of the published admission number (PAN) at Homer First School (Windsor) from 45 to 30.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) Determines (approves) the proposed RBWM Admission Arrangements set out in Appendix A for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025/26.**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Background

- 2.1 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is the Admissions Authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough.
 - 2.2 The roles and responsibilities of the local authority as the admissions authority are set out in the School Admissions Code¹. These responsibilities include setting the admissions arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough.
 - 2.3 The admissions arrangements include the process for applying for a school place, the criteria for allocating places if a school is over-subscribed, and a list of how many places per relevant age year group are available at each school (Published Admission Number (PAN)).
 - 2.4 In drawing up their admission arrangements, admission authorities must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear, and objective. These arrangements must be 'determined' (approved) annually by 28th February and published by 15th March to comply with the statute. These arrangements are then ready for parents and carers when they start to apply for school places in the Autumn for the entry the following September.
 - 2.5 This year, therefore, the borough is considering the admissions arrangements for parents and carers who will start to apply this Autumn (2024) for places in September 2025.
 - 2.6 If there are significant changes to the admission arrangements a consultation lasting for a minimum of six weeks must take place between 1 October and 31 January.
 - 2.7 Voluntary aided schools and academies (including free schools) are responsible for determining their own admission arrangements.
- Proposed admissions arrangements for 2024/25
- 2.8 Two relatively minor changes to the Royal Borough's admissions arrangements have been proposed:
 - the southward extension of the designated area for Riverside Primary School, so that it will include an area of Maidenhead where there is significant housing development.
 - the reduction in the PAN at Homer First School, from 45 to 30, in response to falling demand locally.
 - 2.9 Both proposed changes were first proposed to Cabinet in November 2023 in the report on *Demand for school places*². There is more detail about both proposals in the following sections.
 - 2.10 A number of minor clarifications and updates have also been made to the admissions arrangements to bring them into line with the latest guidance issued by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA). The OSA's role in the

¹ [School Admissions Code](#), Department for Education, 2021.

² [Demand for School Places](#) (see item 8), The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, 29th November 2023.

admissions process is to rule on objections made by various parties to admissions arrangements set by admissions authorities. Although there have not been any recent objections to the Royal Borough's admissions arrangements, the OSA's decisions are kept under review by officers to ensure continued compliance locally.

- 2.11 The full proposed arrangements are set out at Appendix A. These arrangements reflect the changes suggested by the OSA.

Extension of the designated area for Riverside Primary School

- 2.12 The *Demand for school places* report recommended a delay to the opening of a new primary school on the Chiltern Road site in south east Maidenhead, which was approved by Cabinet. Proceeding with the opening would have likely led to a large number of surplus (spare) primary school places in the town.

- 2.13 South east Maidenhead remains an area of growth in demand, however, due to significant amounts of new housing in the area. In order to ensure that residents can continue to get a local primary school place, it was proposed that the designated area of Riverside Primary School be extended to cover part of the area.

- 2.14 The southern boundary currently runs along the A4 from the Thames to Maidenhead/Bourne End railway line. The proposal would extend it southwards to also cover the area between the A4 and the main Reading/London railway line, with Frascati Way as the western boundary. This area includes a significant number of new dwellings and is currently in the designated area for Oldfield Primary School. This will continue to be the case – Oldfield Primary School's designated area will not be changed as part of this proposal.

Reduction in the Published Admission Number at Homer First School

- 2.15 The *Demand for school places* report also set out how demand for school places is falling in Windsor, with a projected surplus of 93 places at Reception for September 2025, reaching 110 by September 2027. This level of spare places (approximately 20%) is unsustainable, and Cabinet approved action to address this by reducing PANs at one or more first schools.
- 2.16 Although five first schools could potentially reduce their PANs, only one – Homer first School - has currently agreed. The proposal is to reduce the PAN from the current 45 Reception places to 30 from September 2025.
- 2.17 The Governing Body of Homer First School has separately requested that the PAN be reduced to 30 for the September 2024 intake. As the admissions arrangements for September 2024 have already been determined, the Royal Borough has had to make an application to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator for an 'in-year variation' to reduce the PAN. The outcome of this application is expected by March 2024.
- 2.18 The school currently has 37 children in Reception, leaving eight places empty. The number of 1st preferences for the school has only been slightly above the proposed PAN of 30 in recent years, and around four of those each year have come from outside the borough. One or two each year are from other parts of Windsor and the surrounding villages.

- 2.19 As demand for school places in the area around Homer First School is set to continue falling, it seems very likely that a reduction in the PAN to 30 will have little or no impact on the likelihood of local Windsor residents getting a place at the school. Some applicants from further afield may be disappointed, but the number is likely to be very low.
- 2.20 If approved, this reduction in PAN at Homer First School would reduce the surplus places to a projected 78 for September 2025, and 105 for September 2026. This is still high, and further reductions at other schools are likely to be required in the future.
- 2.21 It is not proposed that there should be any changes to the accommodation at Homer First School. If demand rises again, therefore, the school will be able to expand back to a PAN of 45.

Outcome of the consultation

- 2.22 As set out in paragraph 2.6, the Royal Borough has had to consult on these changes. There are more details about the consultation in Section 8.
- 2.23 Only four responses were received. One was from a middle school in Windsor, with no comments on the admissions arrangements. A further three responses were from parents at Homer First School, one of whom is also a governor. All three of these respondents were in favour of the proposal to reduce the PAN at Homer First School for both September 2024 and September 2025. The three respondents expressed no view on the proposal to extend the designated area at Riverside Primary School.

Next steps

- 2.24 As a result of the outcome of the consultation, this report recommends that the admissions arrangements set out in Appendix A – and including both proposed changes – be approved.

Options

Table 2: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Determines (approves) the proposed admission arrangements set out in Appendix A for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025/26. This is the recommended option	The Royal Borough must, by law, approve the admissions arrangements by 28 th February. The proposed changes are relatively minor and are in response to changing demand for school places locally.
Do nothing. This is not the recommended option.	Doing nothing will mean that the Royal Borough does not have lawful admissions arrangements in place for the September 2025 school intakes.

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Date of delivery
The admissions arrangements are determined on time	Not determined by 28 th February 2024.	Determined by 28 th February 2024.	28 th February 2024.

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

Revenue Funding

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, the reduction in PAN at Homer First School will allow the school to organise its classes – and teaching staff – more affordably. This will reduce the risk of the school moving into financial deficit in the future.
- 4.2 The proposed extension of the Riverside Primary School designated area should ensure that children can get a local school place. This reduces the risk that they would need to be found a school place further afield, which come with home to school transport costs.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The School Admissions Code 2021 is issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The purpose of the code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and academies (excluding special schools and alternative provision) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.
- 5.2 Regulations 26 to 32 and Schedule 2 of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 cover the requirements of the co-ordinated admissions scheme.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 3: Impact of risk and mitigation

Threat or risk.	Impact with no mitigations in place or if all mitigations fail.	Likelihood of risk occurring with no mitigations in place.	Mitigations currently in place.	Mitigations proposed.	Impact of risk once all mitigations in place and working.	Likelihood of risk occurring with all mitigations in place.
Parts of the admissions arrangements are subsequently found to not comply with the School Admissions Code.	Medium	Medium	Officers monitor decisions made by the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator and amend the arrangements accordingly (changes can be made immediately where necessary to comply with the code).	None	Low	Low

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 Equalities. There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report. An EqIA is attached at Appendix C.
- 7.2 Climate change/sustainability. There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 7.3 Data Protection/GDPR. There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Royal Borough is required to publicly consult on any significant changes to its admissions arrangements. The School Admissions Code states that consultation must be for a minimum of six weeks, between 1st October and 31st January.
- 8.2 The Royal Borough commenced consultation on the arrangements set out at Appendix A on Wednesday 13th December 2023. The consultation finished on Wednesday 31st January, giving seven weeks of consultation.
- 8.3 The School Admissions Code sets out who must be consulted, which includes all other local admissions authorities, neighbouring admissions authorities and parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen. As changes were specifically proposed at Riverside Primary and Homer First, those schools were asked to distribute the consultation document to parents, staff and governors.
- 8.4 The consultation was mainly carried out using an online form, which was accessible via the borough website.
- 8.5 Paragraph 2.23 above sets out the outcome of the consultation.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1 Once the admissions arrangements for 2025/26 are approved, the Royal Borough has until 15th March 2024 to publish the approved arrangements on its website.
- 9.2 Any objections to these admissions arrangements must then be made to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator by 15 May 2024. All other admissions authorities in the borough must, by 8th August 2024, send the local authority all the necessary information to allow the publication of a composite prospectus.
- 9.3 The composite prospectus, locally called the admissions guides, must be published by 12th September. These guides set out the admissions arrangements and give more information for parents and carers about how to apply for a school place.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 This report is supported by three appendices:

- Appendix A – Proposed admissions arrangements for 2024/25.
- Appendix B – Consultation on RBWM admissions arrangements for 2025.
- Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by two background documents:

- [School Admissions Code](#), DfE, September 2021.
- [Demand for School Places](#) (see *item 8*), The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, 29th November 2023.

12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory: Statutory Officers (or deputy)</i>			
Elizabeth Griffiths	Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer	23/01/24	
Elaine Browne	Deputy Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer	23/01/24	29/01/24
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Deputy Director of Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	23/01/24	07/02/24
Jane Cryer	Principal Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer	23/01/24	
<i>Mandatory: Procurement Manager (or deputy) - if report requests approval to go to tender or award a contract</i>			
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager	23/01/24	23/01/24
<i>Mandatory: Data Protection Officer (or deputy) - if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA</i>			
Samantha Wootton	Data Protection Officer	23/01/24	
<i>Mandatory: Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required</i>			
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	23/01/24	
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Stephen Evans	Chief Executive	23/01/24	
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place	23/01/24	
Kevin McDaniel	Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Health	23/01/24	23/01/24
Lin Ferguson	Executive Director of Children's Services & Education	23/01/24	30/01/24
<i>Assistant Directors (where relevant)</i>			
	Assistant Director of		
	Assistant Director of		
	Assistant Director of		
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Cabinet member for Children's Services, Education and Windsor	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
Key decision: First entered into the Cabinet Forward Plan: 10/10/2023	No	No

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