



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 23 February 2023

Report of the Director - Schools & Learning

Children's Services Determined Admissions Arrangements 2024 - 2025
(Cabinet Member for Education)

1. Divisions Affected

County Wide

2. Key Decision

Yes

3. Purpose

- 3.1 To report on the annual consultation, and to seek Cabinet approval for the proposed determined admission arrangements for the academic year 2024/25.

4. Information and Analysis

- 4.1 The regulations concerning school admissions – namely, the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the statutory Department for Education 'School Admissions Code' (September 2021) – requires that the admission arrangements for the 2024/25 academic year are consulted for a minimum of 6 weeks between October 2022 and 31 January 2023 and determined no later than 28 February 2023.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation information was posted on the Derbyshire County Council website from 14 October 2022, setting out the proposed changes to arrangements for the 2024/25 academic year.

The following were also consulted:

- (a) Community, Voluntary Controlled, Academy, Voluntary Aided and Foundation primary and secondary schools in Derbyshire.
- (b) Neighbouring Local Authorities and Diocesan Authorities.
- (c) Neighbouring authority schools which are adjacent to the County boundary and may be affected by Derbyshire's arrangements.

The consultation was publicised by schools' extranet and e-mail on 18 October 2022 and 8 November 2022. The consultation period finished on 27 November 2022 and the responses are shown below.

There are no changes proposed to the over-subscription criteria for community and controlled schools.

A copy of the arrangements is available on the Derbyshire County Council website. [School admission arrangements 2024 to 2025 - Derbyshire County Council](#)

Published Admission Numbers [PANs] The consultation included a number of proposed changes to school Published Admission Numbers (PANs) listed in Appendix 1. These have all been requested by schools and are in line with revised net capacity assessments. A number of objections have been received through the consultation period and these are detailed in 11.3. The changes recommended to go forward are listed in Appendix 2.

Fair Access Protocols There are no changes to the Fair Access Protocols. Copies of the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Protocols are available on the Derbyshire County Council website. <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places/admissions/admission-arrangements.aspx>

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme. It is proposed to make no significant changes to the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme, other than to bring forward relevant dates into the 2024/25 admission rounds.

6. Alternative Options Considered

N/A

7. Implications

- 7.1 The DfE School Admission Code requires authorities to consult on their admission arrangements annually where they propose changes to the policy. If no changes are required, then the admission authority must consult once every 7 years. As the admission authority is making changes to published admission arrangements which include reductions, the council is legally obliged to consult and determine the admission arrangements for the 24/25 academic year by 28 February 2023.

8. Background Papers

School Admissions Code (DfE September 2021).

Schools Admissions Appeals Code (DfE October 2022).

2023/24 Consultation documents.

Proposed Admission Arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Derbyshire for the 2023/24 academic year.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – proposed changes to Published Admission Numbers as per the consultation.
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – proposed changes to Published Admission Numbers following consultation.

10. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

10.1 Considers the outcome of the consultation and approves the proposed determined admission arrangements for the academic year 2024/2025, with the exception of Appendix 1 which has been replaced with Appendix 2. Cabinet to consider the changes to PANs as detailed in Appendix 2.

11. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 11.1 To ensure legal compliance with the statutory obligations for school admissions as defined in the DfE School Admission Code (2021)
- 11.2 The consultation period has now closed.
- 11.3 A number of responses to the consultation were received in relation to the proposed PAN changes at Risley Lower Grammar School and Speedwell Infant School. A summary and consideration of the issues raised are included as Appendices 3 and 4.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?

12.1 No

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This report has been approved by the following officers:

<p>On behalf of:</p> <p>Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer Director of Finance and ICT Managing Executive Director Executive Director(s)</p>	
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Implications

Financial

1.1 None

Legal

2.1 None

Human Resources

3.1 None

Information Technology

4.1 None

Equalities Impact

5.1 None

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

6.1 Not applicable

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

7.1 Derbyshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient primary and secondary school places and is committed to working in close partnership with schools, academy trusts, the dioceses and key partners to ensure that the supply of school places across Derbyshire is in the right location, is of sufficient size, is viable and of good quality. We know that schools can face challenges in meeting pupils' needs, particularly where pupil numbers are falling, and that in some cases, changes to the pattern of school organisation in an area can help secure the viability of schools, improve opportunities and raise standards.

Appendix 1

Published Admission Numbers for Community and Controlled Schools for 2024/25

Primarily as a result of a review of the accommodation of the schools and the net capacity assessment of the buildings, proposed changes to Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for 2024/25 are as follows –

<u>School</u>	<u>Movement of PAN</u>	<u>Details</u>
Reductions		
Speedwell Infant School	40 to 30	Operational reasons
Risley Lower Grammar School	19 to 15	Review of accommodation

Increases

Hunloke Park Primary School	40 to 45	Expansion of accommodation
Ridgeway Primary School	15 to 25	Review of accommodation
Chapel-en-le-Frith primary School	60 to 75	Expansion of accommodation

All other PANs remain as published in the 2023/24 arrangements.

Appendix 2

Published Admission Numbers for Community and Controlled Schools for 2024/25

As a result of a review of the accommodation of the schools and the net capacity assessment of the buildings, proposed changes to Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for 2024/25 are as follows –

<u>School</u>	<u>Movement of PAN</u>	<u>Details</u>
Reduction		
Risley Lower Grammar School	19 to 15	Review of accommodation
Increases		
Hunloke Park Primary School	40 to 45	Expansion of accommodation
Ridgeway Primary School	15 to 25	Review of accommodation
Chapel-en-le-Frith primary School	60 to 75	Expansion of accommodation

All other PANs remain as published in the 2023/24 arrangements.

Appendix 3

Responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN of Speedwell Infant School.

The reduction has been requested by the leadership of the school due to the difficulties faced by operating at the current PAN of 40 and having an intake of 31 in September 2021. Reception intakes of 34, 31, and 32 are currently forecast for the next 3 years, those these may increase over time as a result of housing development across the area. As of September 2025, the reception intake is forecast to fall to below 30, however this does not include potential yields from housing developments. Analysis indicates that an additional 8 infant aged children will be residing within Speedwell's normal area by 2024.

This request would see the school reduce to an intake of 30 reception children per year ahead of forecast demand dropping below what the reduced PAN would be. Population data indicates all age cohorts aged 1 to 4 years broadly consistent with the ages currently in the school.

Financial viability is acknowledged as a critical issue for the school and one which needs to attract any support available in the form of financial assistance. However, there are a number of factors which need to be considered in terms of ensuring that sufficient local places exist for families within the normal area. An objection has been received to the proposal which highlights how the change might be detrimental to local families. The points made are set out below.

For context Speedwell Infant School is located alongside Staveley Junior School on College Avenue off the A619 in Staveley. Most pupils progress from the infant school to the junior school.

- The anticipated demand for reception places exceeds 30 for the next 3 years. Therefore, it is of concern that a number of families may be unable to access a Reception place at Speedwell Infants within that timescale. In terms of their ability to secure a local school place elsewhere it should be noted that 3 of the 5 other primary phase schools within 1 mile are projected to be oversubscribed. It is important not to prevent access to a school place at Speedwell Infants for a family resident in the normal area who might struggle to access education elsewhere due to travel distances and costs, these potentially being significant barriers to accessing education.

It is worth noting that the closest school to Speedwell for reception places is St Joseph's Primary school, which consistently operates at capacity, attracting a large proportion of it's pupils from Speedwell. Looking further afield, Inkersall and Poolsbrook could potentially offer alternatives for pupils unable to secure a place at Speedwell, however the other options of Hollingwood and Barrow Hill are projected to be full. There are another 5 primary phase schools within 2 miles.

- The school is located within an area of very high deprivation. The need to ensure that local school places are available is paramount. Any families unable to secure a place due to the reduction might find themselves in an impossible situation of having children already in Speedwell and/or the adjacent Staveley Junior School having to drop off and pick up at two different schools. This will potentially cause movement out of both Speedwell and Staveley to wherever primary places can be secured, exacerbating the longer-term problems of falling rolls in each of the two schools.
- In terms of future pupil numbers, there is a development of 400 dwellings at Inkersall Road which is due to start building at a rate of 50 per year as of 2022/23. This being in the normal areas of Speedwell and Staveley schools, as well as Inkersall's, we would expect this to increase pupil numbers as the development builds out. Likewise housing development in other schools' normal areas around the wider locality may reduce the numbers of places available at other schools for families in the Speedwell normal area and cause some 'push back', thus increasing demand for the school.
- The likely impact on Staveley Junior School needs to also be considered. If parents of pupils at Speedwell and Staveley are unable to secure a reception place for a younger sibling, they may need to remove their older child so that their children can attend the same primary school. This scenario could work to reduce numbers at both schools, potentially resulting in redundancies.

Recommendation –

In order to fulfil the statutory requirement to ensure sufficiency of local school places, it is the view of Children's Services Development that the proposal should not proceed at this point in time. It is recommended that the proposal is revisited in the next annual consultation and considered in light of current pupil projections and population data at that point.

Appendix 4

Responses to the consultation on reducing the PAN of Risley Lower Grammar School

This reduction was a request from the school on the basis of the unsuitability of the current PAN for their accommodation. The use of the rooms within school were considered and it is agreed that 15 fits well as a PAN and is more appropriate than the current 19.

Two representations were received in response to the consultation to reduce the PAN. The concerns have been summarised and considered below.

- Concern that the lower numbers will mean that the school will run only 3 classes and mix Key Stages:

The school have confirmed that they plan to run four classes. Reception would be a discrete class to allow the delivery of the EYFS curriculum without the need to divert attention to the National Curriculum for year one. There would be a KS1 class of 15 Y1 and 15 Y2. This would reach the legal maximum of 30 in an infant class. Key Stage 2 would be taught across two classes.

- The school will struggle financially in the longer term if it takes lower numbers, as 105 would never allow 4 full classes:

The school is currently prevented from running five classes of 30 children because the 5th classroom is too small, at 36 square metres, to accommodate a full class. The school has previously been able to employ five teachers with less than five full classes. The finances of the school do depend on the number of children, and they have calculated that they can afford four teachers (including teaching time from the Headteacher) for four classes.

- Concern that the reduction will prompt a downward spiral for the school and a fear that school will lose pupils and end up closing:

Governors and staff are keen to work with all concerned to prevent this from happening. A central attraction of the school is understood to be its small size and church links.

- A feeling of a lack of consultation with parents ahead of the proposal. Why weren't parents given the opportunity to ask questions, for example through an information evening?

Governors made the decision to pursue the PAN reduction with input from the stake holders represented in the Governing board. Parents were informed of the consultation and provided with a written account of the school leadership's assessment of what it would mean for current parents seeking to have siblings admitted to the school. The Headteacher has provided details of the process of engagement with parents, including an anonymous electronic survey and communication inviting further contact.

- Would there be further reductions in numbers in the future, seeing the school continue to decline in size?

An assessment of the capacity of the school indicates that 15 is a more suitable PAN than 19 due to the accommodation available. There are four good sized classrooms and no hall, and it is not envisaged that any PAN below 15 would be suitable. There are no plans to reduce the size of classrooms or the number from either the school or DCC.

- Why are school reducing to 105 instead of one which would lead to a population of 120? (this would be 17) What other options have been considered and why have they been rejected?

When looking at numbers it is necessary to have a workable class structure to deliver the curriculum. It is not as easy as 30 children x 4 classes equals 120 children. Then 120 children divided by 7-year groups equals a PAN of 17.

There is a legal class size limit for infant classes of 30 children. Working to a capacity of 120 would mean 17 reception age and 13 Y1 age in the first class. The second class would be 4 Y1, 17 Y2 and 9 Y3 children. The third class would be 8 Y3, 17 Y4 and 5 Y5. The last class would be 12 Y5 and 17 Y6. Having two classes with three-year groups in them (classes 2 and 3), as well as two classes with multiple curriculums or key stages (classes 1 and 2) is not a curriculum structure you would design.

If you wanted to avoid three years in one class, then you would split the 51 children in years Reception to 2 between two classes. The remaining 68 children would be split between two junior classes. This has small numbers in the infants but large numbers in the juniors. It would also require Reception and Y1 to be mixed.

It is worth noting that the upper range of the net capacity would allow school some flexibility to operate in excess of 105. It is possible to admit over PAN as and when there is demand and existing class sizes allow. This can be requested on a year-by-year basis through agreement with DCC.

- What are the pros and cons as envisaged by the school?

The school and DCC want the children coming in to have the best start at the school. It is the considered opinion of the Head, staff and Governors that a single age reception class provides that. The smallest classroom has been used for Reception previously but is too small and has no access to outdoor play space. EYFS need a large room with access to the outside (ie their current room). Providing this means that there are only three large rooms left for the rest of the school. These 4 rooms are those which are included on the Net Capacity Assessment and fit with a PAN of 15.

Recommendation -

It is the view of Children's Services Development that the proposal fits with the capacity of the school buildings and that all concerns voiced have been addressed by the school leadership.