

Policy Committee Decision Report

Title of Report:	School Admission Arrangements for the 2026/27 academic year
Date of Decision:	4 February 2025
Report To:	Education, Children & Families
Report Of:	Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Director of Children's Services
Report Author:	John Bigley, Manager, Admissions & Access

Executive Summary:

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 2026/27. Even where there has been no consultation, the arrangements must still be determined by 28 February 2025.

This report seeks approval to determine the proposed admission arrangements for 2026/27, including the oversubscription criteria and co-ordinated admission schemes for primary and secondary schools.



Council Plan outcomes:

[A place where all children belong, and all young people can build a successful future](#)

[A creative and prosperous city full of culture, learning, and innovation](#)

Policy Committee remit:

This report is to be considered by the Education, Children & Families Policy Committee as its remit includes:

- Schools (including sufficiency of school places)
- Mainstream and specialist education (early years, children and young people)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Learning and Skills policy, programmes and interventions (children and young people)

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? No



Recommendations:

Education, Children & Families Committee is recommended to determine:

1. The oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2026/27 (including for external Sixth Forms)
2. Proposed Admission Numbers for 2026/27
3. The statutory Primary and Secondary co-ordinated admission schemes for 2026/27

Financial Implications: **No** (Approved by Kayleigh Inman)

Legal Implications: (Approved by Nadine Wynter)

Equality and Inclusion Implications: No Approved by: Bashir Khan

EIA number: 2880

Climate Change Implications: No

Background Papers:

The Local Authority complies with the statutory Admission Code of Practice

[School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code)

Appendices: Appendix A Primary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme.
Appendix B Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme
Appendix C Proposed Admission Numbers 2026/27



1. Background to the issue

The Local Authority, as Admission Authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Sheffield, must determine its Admission Arrangements for these schools each year. The Admission Arrangements must be published in the Composite Prospectus (A Guide for Parents). The following confirms the proposed Admission Arrangements for the 2026/27 academic year.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Sheffield Local Authority is only 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.

Even if the admission arrangements are not consulted upon, they must still be “determined” for each academic year.

- 2.2 The Oversubscription Criteria

(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 statutory duty, 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 tiebreaker 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: -

1. a brother and/or sister
2. a stepbrother and/or stepsister (to include half brothers/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, (iii), (iv) or (v) 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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 allocated to 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.

2.5 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)**

2.6 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 because 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.

3. Entry Outside the Normal Year Group

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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 consider



the views of the head teacher at 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.

4. Proposed Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

- 4.1 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 2026/27 are provided at **Appendix A**

There are proposed reductions at:

School	Designation	Admission Number	Proposed Admission Number
Birley Spa Primary	Academy	60	30*
Concord Junior School	Academy	60	45*
Deepcar St. John's Junior	Voluntary Aided	73	60*
Lowedges Primary	Academy	60	45
Nether Green Infant	Community	75	60
Pipworth Primary	Community	82	60*
Rainbow Forge Primary	Academy	54	45*
Reignhead Primary	Community	60	30
Wincobank NI	Academy	60	45*



Windmill Hill Primary	Academy	54	45*
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*Ongoing reductions

5. Proposed Sixth Form Admission Arrangements for 2026/27

- 5.1 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).

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 tiebreaker 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

Tapton Academy

6. How does this decision contribute to the Council Plan?

6.1 Council Plan outcome

6.1.1 A place where all children belong, and all young people can build a successful future.

Whilst there is no guarantee on Admission outcomes, the catchment area-based Admission Policy and the fact that Siblings are prioritised for admission mean that children should be able to access a local and accessible school if parents apply there. The Sibling priority normally means that children can follow older siblings.

For the 2024/25 intakes 98.87% of Primary children obtained a place at one of the three preferred schools, of which 94.53% were allocated their first preference. In Secondary schools 97.84% were allocated one of the three preferred schools, of which 90.43% were first preference.

Both outcomes were higher than the national average which was 98.54% for Primary (93.15% first preference) and 94.97% for Secondary (86.24% first preference).

6.2 People – Prosperity - Planet

6.2.1 The catchment area system normally gives children access to a local school so walking to school is an option, especially at primary school.

6.3 City Goals

6.3.1 Step up

In coming together as friends, neighbours, strangers and communities, we can step up to the challenges ahead. The Admission policy prioritises admission to local schools and also prioritises to afford the best chance of Siblings attending school together.



6.4 Future Sheffield Programme – School Admissions - Update

The School Admissions Service is a key part of Future Sheffield, closely linked to our Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy. Officers have met with consultants to take them through the application process from beginning to end. Admission outcomes in Sheffield already exceed national averages as confirmed at paragraph 6.1.1 and the initial meeting was for the consultants to understand the statutory framework and identify any potential “pain points” within the process, where further improvement might be possible. This analysis has highlighted planned work in the following areas.

1. **Early savings:** We are exploring efficiencies to reduce manual elements of the process and avoid duplication which will enable us to divert more resources into actual processing and securing school places. Work smarter.
2. **Website refresh:** We have recognised that we can improve our service for parents/carers by updating our website to provide interactive options for parents, including an option to apply for in-year places on-line. This facility is already available for the normal year of entry and we believe it would represent a significant development with regard to the customer experience.
3. **Communication with Schools:** We have implemented a new digital portal through which schools can access live application data for the first year of entry. Historically this information has been shared through individual school reports which were time consuming to produce and were only a snapshot. The portal means that all additional applications are instantly shared with schools and less Officer time is spent on preparing and sending individual reports. This time can now be spent on other aspects of the process.
4. **Customer Experience:** Through exploration of further digital opportunities we are working towards further modernising the Admissions system. Our goal is to minimise the amount of time that any child spends without a school place. We already provide parents with advice and guidance and are exploring further opportunities to enhance the availability and quality of that offer.

Officers are continuing to work with the consultants on the Future Sheffield Programme and will hopefully receive practical support and advice in order to enhance and improve the customer journey.

7. **What community or partner engagement has been undertaken and how has it informed the proposal?**

- 7.1 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.

As there have not been any changes to the Admission Arrangements since the last consultation for 2023/24, there has not been any consultation for 2026/27.

8. What alternative options did we consider?

8.1 There have not been any proposals to change the current Admission Arrangements. The outturns presented at 6.1.1 above confirm a very high level of preferences met. It is not possible to achieve 100% outcomes because demand will always be higher than available places at a number of schools. Changing the oversubscription criteria would not necessarily lead to better outcomes.

9. How has equality, diversity and inclusion been actively considered?

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out (Ref 2880)

10. Financial and Commercial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications to this report.

11. Legal Implications

11.1 The Authority is legally obliged to formally determine its admission arrangements by 28 February 2025. 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.

12. Climate and Environmental Implications

12.1 There are no direct climate and environmental implications to this report, except providing school places in close proximity to home may reduce transport requirements as described above.

13. Other implications

13.1 There are no other implications to this report.

14. Reasons for decision

14.1 The recommendation to approve the proposed admission arrangements for 2026/27 will ensure that the Authority carries out its statutory duty to consult and determine its admission arrangements for the 2026/27 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.

