

**DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
24 FEBRUARY 2026**

**Determination of 2027-28 Admission Arrangements for OCC
Community and VC Schools
Report by Director of Children's Services**

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to approve and determine the following documents:

- a) **Scheme of Co-ordination for Normal Points of Transfer**
- b) **Admission Arrangements and Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools**
- c) **Published Admission Numbers (PANs)**
- d) **In-Year Admissions Scheme**

Executive Summary

2. This report outlines the proposed school admissions arrangements for Oxfordshire for the 2027–28 academic year following public consultation. It covers four key policy documents:
 - Scheme of Co-ordination for Normal Points of Transfer (Appendix A)
 - Admission Arrangements and Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools (Appendix B)
 - Published Admission Numbers (PANs) (Appendix C)
 - In-Year Admissions Scheme (Appendix D)
3. These documents have been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with the School Admissions Code 2021 and relevant legislation. The proposed changes aim to improve clarity, fairness, and operational efficiency in the admissions process.

Key changes and highlights:

4. Home to School Travel: All references to notification of eligibility removed from the documents to allow flexibility for future parent-led travel application models.
5. Waiting List Closure: Revised to 21 July 2028 (end of school year) to ensure late-term vacancies can be filled before summer.

6. School Gates: A document with details of school gates for community and voluntary controlled schools has been added to the Admission Arrangements and Oversubscription Criteria document.
7. Disputed Applications: A new policy has been developed with Legal Services to explain how applications will be processed where this is parental disagreement.
8. Service Personnel and Crown Servants: Highlighted that applications with official relocation letters will be processed immediately, regardless of start date and specific reference to the Armed Forces Covenant added.
9. Admissions Decision-Making: Clarification that Admission Authorities retain full responsibility; references to the LA acting as “agent” have been removed.
10. On-Roll Reporting: Frequency increased from every 10 to every 5 school days to improve vacancy data accuracy.
11. Published Admission Number (PAN) Changes:
Ducklington Church of England Primary School
Reduction in PAN for 2027/28 from 30 to 20
North Kidlington Primary School
Reduction in PAN for 2027/28 from 45 to 30

Background

12. Paragraph 1.45 of the 2021 School Admissions Code requires Admission Authorities to consult when changes are proposed to admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following school year or at least once every seven years. The consultation must be for a minimum of 6 calendar weeks between 1 October and 31 January.
13. The previous consultation was between 1 November 2024 and 31 January 2025.
14. The Council’s practice is to consult annually on the arrangements/rules and schemes for the following year even where no substantive changes are proposed.
15. The term ‘admission arrangements’ means the overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used to allow parents to apply for school places, process those requests and decide on the allocation including any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered.
16. The Council is the Admission Authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within Oxfordshire. Therefore, the Council is responsible for determining the admission arrangements, over-subscription criteria and Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for these schools.

17. This admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria set out how places will be allocated at community and voluntary controlled schools.
18. The 2021 School Admissions Code requires oversubscription criteria to be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Admission authorities must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs. In Oxfordshire the practice continues to be for schools to prioritise children in their local community in the first instance. Therefore, children in the catchment area have a higher priority than those with siblings already at the school or attending particular linked schools. These proposed over-subscription criteria comply with the Code and all relevant legislation are permissible and therefore do not breach equality legislation.
19. As required by the School Admissions Code, the council provides a co-ordinated scheme for phased transfers. These are:
 - Starting infant/primary school for the first time in Reception (4 year olds)
 - Transferring from infant/primary to primary/junior school (7 year olds)
 - Starting secondary school for the first time (11 year olds)The scheme sets out the formal process that will be followed in Oxfordshire to allow parents/carers to apply for phased transfers, process those applications liaising appropriately with other local authorities and OAA schools and allocate school places on the National Offer Day set in the 2021 School Admissions Code and at later dates. The dates are set within the scheme.
20. All Admission Authorities in Oxfordshire must participate in the scheme for the above phased transfers. By determining this scheme it becomes part of the admission arrangements/rules for all schools in Oxfordshire whether they are community, voluntary controlled or OAA schools.
21. Paragraph 2.23 of the 2021 School Admissions Code makes the existence of a scheme to process in-year applications voluntary. In Oxfordshire the policy continues to be to operate a co-ordinated in-year scheme.
22. All community and voluntary controlled schools must be part of this scheme because the Council is the Admission Authority. OAA schools are assumed to be participants in the scheme as well unless they have opted out. A small number of OAA schools have opted out. By determining this scheme it becomes part of the admission arrangements/rules for all participating schools in Oxfordshire whether they are community, voluntary controlled or OAA schools (unless they have opted out where they must continue to comply with the 2021 School Admissions Code which places responsibility on them to co-operate with the local authority).
23. Paragraph 1.49 of the 2021 School Admissions Code requires Admission Authorities to determine their arrangements/rules and PAN annually by 28 February.
24. Paragraph 1.50 of the 2021 School Admissions Code requires Admission Authorities to publish their arrangements/rules and PAN annually by 15 March.

Current Situation and Proposals for Change

25. In 2024, the Schools Adjudicator was asked to consider a proposed change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for a voluntary controlled school. As part of this determination, the Adjudicator reviewed all four relevant documents: the admission arrangements, admission rules, coordinated scheme, and in-year scheme.
26. In the resulting report (REF4237), issued on 25 February 2024, the Adjudicator identified aspects within these documents that were, in their view, not compliant with the 2021 School Admissions Code. The Council subsequently amended the arrangements, rules, and schemes for future years, and these revisions have been incorporated into the 2027–28 documents.
27. The Council is therefore satisfied that all four documents (the admission arrangements, admission rules, coordinated scheme, and in-year scheme) are compliant with the 2021 School Admissions Code and the relevant legislation.

Scheme of Co-ordination for Normal Points of Transfer for the 2027-28 school year

28. The first section of this document shows the proposed amendments since the “Determined scheme of co-ordination for admissions to schools at the normal points of entry/transfer for the 2026/27 academic year”. In summary these are:
 - Date changes for the new school year cycle.
 - There is no statutory requirement for the co-ordinated scheme to include references to Home to School Travel entitlement or the criteria and processes used to assess eligibility under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. In light of ongoing discussions regarding a potential move towards parent-led travel applications, all references to Home to School Travel eligibility notification have been removed from the scheme. This change is intended to provide flexibility for future policy decisions.
 - The date on which waiting lists will close has been revised from 30 June 2028 to the final day of the school year. This change ensures that any school places which become available towards the end of term can still be offered to children in need of a place before the summer break begins.
 - As a result of the feedback received and recent legal advice regarding the Council’s procedures for handling applications involving parental disputes, the proposed approach of using GP registration to determine which application to progress will not be implemented. Instead, a new annex (Annex G) has been added to this document, providing clear and updated guidance on how these applications will be processed. This annex has been developed and approved

by Legal Services and will also be published on the Council's web pages as a policy.

- No other changes proposed.

Proposed Admission Arrangements and Over-subscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2027/28 school year

29. The first section of this document shows the proposed amendments since the "Determined Admission Arrangements and Over-subscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2026/27 academic year". In summary these are:

- Dates changed for the new school year cycle.
- There is no statutory requirement for the admissions arrangements to include references to Home to School Travel entitlement or the criteria and process used to assess eligibility under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. In light of ongoing discussions regarding a potential move towards parent-led travel applications, reference to Home to School Travel eligibility notification have been removed from the arrangements. This change is intended to provide flexibility for future policy decisions.
- The date on which waiting lists will close has been revised from 30 June 2028 to 21 July 2028, aligning with the final day of the school year. This change ensures that any school places which become available towards the end of term can still be offered to children in need of a place before the summer break begins.
- A new annex (Annex A) has been added which contains the names and Eastings and Northings for the gates used for distance measurements for all OCC schools.
- As a result of the feedback received, specific reference to the Armed Forces Covenant has been added to the section relating to home addresses for families of service personnel with a confirmed posting, or crown servants returning from overseas.
- As a result of the feedback received and recent legal advice regarding the Council's procedures for handling applications involving parental disputes, the proposed approach of using GP registration to determine which application to progress will not be implemented. Instead, a new annex (Annex G) has been added to this document, providing clear and updated guidance on how these applications will be processed. This annex has been developed and approved by Legal Services and will also be published on the Council's web pages as a policy.
- No other changes proposed.

Published Admission Numbers (PANs) proposed for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2027/28 school year

30. The first section of this document shows the proposed amendments since the “Published Admission Numbers (PANs) determined for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2026/27 academic year”. In summary these are:

- **North Kidlington Primary School**

The school initiated a request to reduce its Published Admission Number (PAN) for 2027/28 from 45 to 30. The Governors also asked the Council to apply to the Schools Adjudicator for variations to the PAN for earlier years. The adjudicator approved the reduction from 45 to 30 for 2025/26 but did not approve the same change for 2026/27, citing insufficient data on reception applications for that year. However, the adjudicator indicated they would consider a re-application in 2026, once more information on September 2026 reception applications is available.

- **Ducklington Church of England Primary School**

The school have requested to reduce the PAN from 30 to 20.

- No other changes proposed – the PANs for 2027/28 for all other community and voluntary controlled schools to remain the same as they were for 2026/27.

Proposed In-Year Admissions Scheme for admissions to schools in Oxfordshire for children in year groups Reception to Year 11 for the 2027/28 school year

31. The first section of this document shows the proposed amendments since the “Determined In-Year Admissions Scheme for admissions to schools in Oxfordshire for children in year groups Reception to Year 11 for the 2026/27 academic year”. In summary these are:

- Dates updated for the new school year cycle.
- To improve clarity and support for families of service personnel with confirmed postings, and Crown servants returning from overseas, paragraph 2.9 has been added to the scheme. This confirms that applications submitted with an official relocation letter will be processed immediately, regardless of the intended start date. This amendment aligns with paragraph 2.21 of the School Admissions Code 2021 and enhances the responsiveness and quality of service provided to these families. Specific reference to the Armed Forces Covenant has also been included.
- The School Admissions Code 2021 clearly states that Admission Authorities must retain full responsibility for all admissions decisions. In previous versions of Oxfordshire County Council’s In-Year Admissions Scheme, the local authority was described as acting as “the agent” for Own Admission Authority (OAA) schools, where agreed. To reinforce the non-delegable nature of admissions decisions, all references to this “agency”

role have been removed from the proposed In-Year Admissions Scheme for 2027–28. This amendment ensures a clear separation of responsibilities between the local authority and OAA schools.

- To ensure parents receive accurate and timely information about school vacancies, the reporting frequency of on-roll pupil numbers to the local authority has been updated. Schools will now be required to report this data every five school days, rather than every ten. This change enhances the ability to provide up-to-date information on available places.
- There is no statutory requirement for the in-year scheme to include references to Home to School Travel entitlement or the criteria and process used to assess eligibility under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. In light of ongoing discussions regarding a potential move towards parent-led travel applications, all references to Home to School Travel eligibility notification have been removed from the scheme. This change is intended to provide flexibility for future policy decisions.
- The date on which waiting lists will close has been revised from 30 June 2028 to the final day of the school year. This change ensures that any school places which become available towards the end of term can still be offered to children in need of a place before the summer break begins.
- As a result of the feedback received and recent legal advice regarding the Council's procedures for handling applications involving parental disputes, the proposed approach of using GP registration to determine which application to progress will not be implemented. Instead, a new annex (Annex G) has been added to this document, providing clear and updated guidance on how these applications will be processed. This annex has been developed and approved by Legal Services and will also be published on our web pages as a policy.
- No other changes proposed.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

32. The proposed changes to the existing admissions arrangements are in line with county's vision to make Oxfordshire a fairer county by creating strong and connected communities by ensuring:
- Fair access to schools and education
 - Easier for families to access a school place as close to where they live as possible
 - Reducing inequality in our communities and making sure all children feel included and supported to succeed

Financial Implications

33. The proposals in this report are statutory and procedural in nature and do not give rise to any new or additional revenue or capital expenditure for Oxfordshire

County Council. They can be delivered within existing service budgets and resources. Schools are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is a ring-fenced grant provided by the Department for Education, and the proposals do not alter school funding arrangements. The recommendations are therefore consistent with the assumptions set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and do not require any additional funding, savings, or budget adjustments.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

34. Admission authorities must act in accordance with the, School Admissions Code 2021 which contains the mandatory requirements and statutory guidance for admissions arrangements, the School Admission Appeals Code, School Standards and Framework Act 1998; the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.
35. The potential legal implications of the new proposals have been explored, in consultation with the Head of Legal as appropriate and no legal issues have been identified. The prescribed routes to challenge the admissions arrangements, namely appeals, complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (maintained schools) or the Department of Education (other schools) about an appeal process or Judicial Review, remain available options to challenge these admissions arrangements.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

36. There are no staffing implications resulting from the proposed changes.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

37. EIA attached

Sustainability Implications

38. N/A

Risk Management

39. N/A

Consultations

40. The statutory public consultation was held from 1 December 2025 to 26 January 2026.
41. The documents were placed on the Council's website giving the address to which comments could be sent. Council communication platforms including Facebook and Twitter were also utilised.
42. Copies of all documents were sent to all school admission authorities within Oxfordshire County Council and the relevant consultation areas as well as neighbouring Councils.
43. The consultation was also published on the Let's Talk Oxfordshire consultation pages: [School admissions consultation 2027/28 | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)
44. The Council also coordinated other own admission authority consultations through the website.
45. The Council received three responses to the consultation on Oxfordshire County Council's Scheme of Co-ordination for Normal Points of Transfer, Admission Arrangements and Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, Published Admission Numbers (PANs) and In-Year Admissions Scheme.
46. The comments, the Council's response and any recommendation for change is included at Appendix E.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Annex: Appendix A - Scheme of Co-ordination for Normal Points of Transfer
Appendix B - Admission Arrangements and Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools
Appendix C - Published Admission Numbers (PANs)
Appendix D - In-Year Admissions Scheme
Appendix E – Responses to Consultation

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