

## **Cabinet**

**17 December 2024**

### **School Admission Arrangements 2025/26: Proposed Co-Ordinated Admission Schemes**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tracy Coombs, Portfolio Holder for Education  
Report from: Celia Buxton, Assistant Director Education and SEND  
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#### **Summary**

Each year the Local Authority is required to publish admission schemes and arrangements for primary and secondary schools. If changes are made from the previous year, the Local Authority must undertake a consultation.

The schemes set out how the Local Authority will co-ordinate the processing of applications to schools. The arrangements also set out the relevant entry arrangements (oversubscription criteria and published admission numbers) for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary, infant and junior schools.

Academies, Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools undertake their own consultation on entry arrangements but must co-ordinate with the Local Authority schemes.

This report details the proposed changes to the primary and secondary admission schemes.

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the outcome of the consultation in section 8 of this report, agree the amendments to the admissions arrangements for 2026 in section 5 of the report and to approve the admissions schemes for 2026, as set out at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is also asked to agree to delegate authority to the Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education, to make any necessary in-year changes to the scheme as required.

#### **2. Suggested reasons for decisions**

- 2.1. Approving the proposed admissions schemes would ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty to comply with admissions legislation.

### 3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. Medway's school admission arrangements are consistent with the requirements of the School Admissions Code, which is issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA 1998). There are no specific budgetary implications.
- 3.2. As the admission authority for Medway's Community and Voluntary Controlled schools the Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that its admission arrangements are lawful.
- 3.3. The aim of our admission arrangements is to ensure that the transition for children and their families is as smooth as possible, which supports the Council's priority of supporting Medway's people to realise their potential.

### 4. Background

- 4.1. This report and Appendices 1 & 2 provide details of the proposed schemes for primary and secondary admissions in September 2026/27.
- 4.2. The School Admissions Code 2021 states that consultation must take place between 1 October and 31 January each year and last for a minimum of six weeks.
- 4.3. Medway Council consulted between 1 October and 12 November 2024.
- 4.4. This was to enable the consultation to have finished prior to presentation of the proposed schemes and consultation responses for determination by Cabinet on 17 December 2024.
- 4.5. The proposed co-ordinated admission schemes ensure that there is a clear and fair methodology for allocation of school places in Medway.

### 5. Options

#### 5.1. *Secondary Admissions – co-ordinated scheme and admission arrangements*

##### 5.1.1. The proposed changes are:

- Revision of dates to fit the 2026/27 admission timeline.
- Co-ordinated admissions process for year 7 ends 31 August rather than 31 December.

#### 5.2. *Primary Admissions – co-ordinated scheme and admission arrangements*

##### 5.2.1. The proposed changes are:

- Revision of dates to fit the 2026/27 admission timeline.
- Co-ordinated admissions process for year R and 3 (junior schools) ends 31 August rather than 31 December.

5.3. Appendix 1 provides details of the Local Authority’s proposed co-ordinated admissions schemes for primary admissions 2026.

5.4. Appendix 2 to the report provides details of the Local Authority’s proposed co-ordinated admissions schemes for secondary admissions 2026.

## 6. Advice and analysis

6.1. It is not envisaged that the proposed co-ordinated admissions schemes and admissions arrangements would have any adverse effect on any of the protected characteristic groups.

## 7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Own admission authority schools can change their admission arrangements (including their published admission number) by undertaking their own consultations	Own admission authority schools are permitted to change their arrangements through the annual consultation process	Medway Council can respond and/or object to the consultations of own admission authorities	DIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

## 8. Consultation

8.1. We consulted all Medway schools, other local authorities, diocesan authorities and families in the area. The consultation was published on the Medway Council website for the duration of the consultation period. The consultation invited responses from the public.

8.2. The consultation period was 1 October to 12 November 2024, in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021 to consult for a minimum of six weeks.

8.3. Medway Council received 15 responses.

- 14 responses were in favour of the changes and one response was not in favour.
- The respondent who was not in favour did not give reasons why they were not in favour.

## 9. Climate change implications

9.1. Officers do not anticipate the admissions process outlined in the proposed scheme will have a negative impact on climate change.

9.2. In recent years, over 99% of admissions applications are submitted online and all applications are processed electronically. Other than the < 1% of applications received in hard copy, the admissions process is paperless.

## 10. Financial implications

10.1. The Medway Admissions Team is funded from the central services block of the Dedicated School Grant and the budget approved for 2024/25 is £457,198. The round two revenue budget monitoring reported to Cabinet on 19 November 2024 forecast an overspend of £152,947 which would be transferred into the DSG reserve at the end of the year if it transpires.

## 11. Legal implications

11.1. In accordance with the requirements of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, Local Authorities are required to consult each year with the governing bodies of the schools for whom it is the admission authority (i.e. Community and Voluntary Controlled schools) on the proposed admission arrangements for the following year. In addition, local authorities are required to consult with other admission authority schools (Academies, Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools), other local authorities and other relevant parties (e.g. diocesan boards). Similarly, own admission authority schools have a duty to consult on their proposed arrangements with the local authority and other parties.

11.2. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the procedure for Determining Admission Arrangements, which includes the manner of consultation, matters to which consultation is to relate and the timescale for consultation. All consultations must be completed by 31 January of the academic year prior to that being consulted on (i.e. 31 January 2023 for 2024 admissions).

11.3. Local authorities have an important role to monitor the arrangements of all schools for compliance with the School Admissions Code. Each local authority is required to report to the Schools Adjudicator on the fairness and legality of the admissions arrangements for all schools in our area. The Schools

Adjudicator has a wider remit as the independent enforcer of fair access to schools.

- 11.4. The proposed arrangements require all schools to admit children with Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) or Statements of Special Educational Needs, which name that particular school.
- 11.5. Medway Council and Schools must comply with obligations in regard to equalities under the Equality Act 2010, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by this Act. It must advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people. This involves removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people, including taking steps to meet the needs of people who have a "protected characteristic" in the terms of this Act (protected characteristics for these purposes are: disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). It must encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life and other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 11.6. An admission authority must not discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.
- 11.7. The Equality Act 2010 contains limited exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and sex. Schools designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character are exempt from some aspects of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and this means they can make a decision about whether or not to admit a child as a pupil on the basis of religion or belief. Single-sex schools are lawfully permitted to discriminate on the grounds of sex in their admission arrangements.
- 11.8. Admission authorities are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty and therefore must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations in relation to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 11.9. The Human Rights Act 1998 confers a right of access to education. This right does not extend to securing a place at a particular school. Admission authorities, however, do need to consider parents' reasons for expressing a preference when they make admission decisions, though this may not necessarily result in the allocation of a place.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Primary Admissions Scheme 2026-27  
Appendix 2 - Secondary Admissions Scheme 2026-27  
Appendix 3 – Diversity Impact Assessment

## Background papers

None