

Central Bedfordshire Council

07 October 2025

Executive

Council Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2027-2028.

Report of:

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This report relates to a decision that is: *Key*

This report relates to a decision that is urgent/exempt from call-in: **No**

Purpose of this report

Central Bedfordshire Council is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools. This report proposes changes to one community and two VC schools' arrangements which are required to be consulted on as per the regulations of the School Admissions Code. The report also details the Council's coordinated schemes for admissions for the point of entry for all academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire who are required to participate in this as per the regulations.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Executive is asked to:

1. Approve the consultation in line with the School Admission Code on the proposed admission arrangements for:
 - a) Shillington Lower School, Shillington (Community school)
 - b) Edward Peake CofE VC School, Biggleswade (Voluntary controlled school)
 - c) St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School, Biggleswade (Voluntary controlled school)
2. Note the coordinated schemes for admission for the point of entry for academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire. There is a Primary coordinated scheme to cover Infant, Lower, Primary, Junior and Middle schools and a Secondary coordinated scheme to cover Secondary and Upper Schools.

3. Note the religious affiliation forms for Church of England and Catholic schools which use these in supplement to the common application form.
- 4.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. The report will be considered by Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as consultees to the process, on 11th November 2025.

Executive Summary

2. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that admissions are coordinated for all admission authorities in the local authority's area for children being admitted into the normal year of entry, and that only one offer of a school place is made.
3. The Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the academic year 2027/28 fulfils this requirement, setting out the timeframes for processing admission applications.
4. The Council is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools; it must also undertake consultation on its own admission arrangements where changes are proposed. The admission policy for these schools sets out the published admissions number and criteria in which applications will be considered if the school is oversubscribed.
5. This is part of a standard process for the Council and part of its routine procedures to ensure compliance with the School Admissions Code and the School Admissions Regulations.

Main body of the report

6. Admission arrangements are the procedures and processes that determine how children will be admitted to a school and include the oversubscription criteria which will be applied if more applications are received than there are places available.
7. School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements (England) Regulations 2012 require admission authorities (i.e. the Council in relation to Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in its area, the governing bodies of Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools and the relevant Academy Trust in relation to academies) to consult where changes are proposed on their admission arrangements, including any supplementary information form that will apply for admission applications for the following academic year.
8. The confirmation of religious affiliation form is a supplementary form to the Council's common application form for point of entry admissions and is attached at Appendix D for Church of England schools and Appendix E for Catholic schools in Central Bedfordshire. The schools listed on these forms priorities applicants on faith grounds and cover both Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools.
9. For school entry in 2027, consultation must take place where changes are proposed for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1st October 2025 and 31st January 2026. The Admission Arrangements must then be determined by 28th

February 2026. The Council will conduct its consultation from 22nd October 2025 to 3rd December 2025 for a minimum of 6 weeks to gather the views of all consultees to ensure that it meets the duration of the statutory consultation requirements.

10. Admissions Authorities are required to consult with the following parties:
 - a) Parents of children between the ages of 2 and 18 who are resident in the relevant area.
 - b) Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admissions authority have an interest in the proposed admission arrangements.
 - c) All other admission authorities within the relevant area.
 - d) The Governing Bodies of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.
 - e) Adjoining neighbouring local authorities.
 - f) In the case of schools designated as having a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination in question must also be consulted. This applies to Voluntary Controlled schools.
11. Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they must notify the appropriate bodies and must publish a copy of the determined arrangements on the school's website or their own website (in the case of a local authority) by 15th March in the determination year and continue displaying them for the whole offer year, which is the school year in which offers for places are made.
12. Admission authorities must also send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the local authority as soon as possible before 15 March in the determination year. Admission authorities for schools designated with a religious character must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination.
13. Following determination of arrangements, any objections to those arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator. Objections to admission arrangements must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator by 15th May in the determination year. Admission authorities that are not the local authority must provide all the information that the local authority needs to compile the composite prospectus no later than 8 August, unless agreed otherwise.
14. Listed below are the details of the changes that are proposed. Discussions have been held with the schools prior to bringing forward these proposals and the Headteacher and Governing Body of the schools have conveyed their agreement with these.

Shillington Lower School (Change in PAN from 30 to 15)

15. Shillington Lower School is a one-form entry school in the village of Shillington, in Central Bedfordshire. As a one-form entry school the school has a published admissions number of 30 for the Reception intake year and has one class per year group from Years R – 4.
16. The School Admissions Team and School Organisation Team have reviewed admissions into the school and the pupil forecasts for future years and have discussed these with the Headteacher and Governing Body. This is so the school can effectively plan and organise classes within the scope of the school's financial budget.

17. The pupil forecasts for 2027 onwards show a decrease in children living in the school's catchment area, with nine in 2027, fifteen in 2028 and then thirteen in 2029. A decrease to the school's published admissions number therefore supports the school to manage this in line with the pupil forecasts for the area it serves.
18. It is therefore proposed to lower the published admissions number of the school from 30 to 15 for admissions into the school's point of entry (Year R) for the 2027-28 academic year and beyond.
19. The Headteacher and Governing Body are in support of this proposal for the Council to consult on this change to reduce the school's published admissions number.
20. If in future years, the pupil forecasts show an increase of children in the area, the Council and School can review the published admissions number and increase it if necessary. An increase to the PAN does not require consultation.

Edward Peake CofE VC School (Change in oversubscription arrangements and removal of catchment)

21. Edward Peake CofE VC School is a six-form entry school in the town of Biggleswade and has an admission number of 180 for the point of entry into the school (Year 7). The school started its transition from a Middle school to a Secondary school in September 2024 as part of the reorganisation of education in the Biggleswade area from a 3-tier system to a 2-tier system. The school will have its first Secondary intake to Year 7 in September 2026.
22. A review of the school's admissions criteria has taken place with the Headteacher to look at how the school can better serve local pupils and their families now the school is operating as a secondary school.
23. The school is still operating a catchment area based on their former Middle school status and this therefore does not reflect their new status of being a Secondary school. Discussions were therefore had with the school reviewing the admissions criteria which involved removing the catchment area of the school and prioritising applications based on whether children had siblings or attended feeder schools or had faith reasons for attending the school.
24. The rationale for proposing this criteria is to ensure that after the top two priorities of looked after/previously looked after children and then children of staff, the school can ensure that younger siblings of children already at the school are given priority for a place which ensures that siblings can benefit from the same educational opportunities and aids family logistics of having their children in the same school.
25. Prioritising local feeder primary schools after the sibling criterion also ensures that children in Biggleswade can gain priority to one of their preferred local secondary schools and ensures continuity of education for those children particularly when the town has recently transitioned to a 2-tier system.
26. The prioritisation of the Faith criterion ahead of 'Any Other Children' then enables those children who do not have a sibling or are attending a local feeder school to gain a place at the school on Faith grounds ahead of any other children, which recognises that Edward Peake CofE VC School has religious affiliation to the Church of England which provides a faith based education for parents who may be stating a preference for the school on these grounds.

27. It is therefore proposed to consult on Edward Peake CofE VC School to operate the following admissions oversubscription criteria for the academic year 2027-2028:

Edward Peake CofE VC School: PAN 180

1. All looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. Children of staff
3. Children who have a sibling at the school.
4. Children attending feeder primary schools in the local area: Biggleswade Academy, Caldecote CofE Academy, Dunton CofE Junior School, Lawnside Academy, Northill CofE Academy, Potton Primary School, St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School and Sutton CofE VA Primary School.
5. Children, whose parent/carer(s) have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made.
6. Any other children.

28. The Headteacher, Governing Body and Diocese are supportive of the Council proposing the above admissions oversubscription criteria.

St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School (Change in oversubscription arrangements and removal of catchment)

29. St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School is a two-site four-form entry school in the town of Biggleswade with each site providing two-forms of entry. The school therefore has an admissions number of 120 with each site providing 60 places for the Year R point of entry and two classes per year group from Years R – 6.
30. The school was also part of the reorganisation of education in the Biggleswade area and transitioned from being a lower school to a primary school in 2024. The two sites of St. Andrew's along with two other primary academies serve the town of Biggleswade, with outlying villages being served by their local village primary school, in the main.
31. Discussions were had with the school about their admissions criteria for the two schools to ensure that this aligns with the other two primary schools in the town and provides fairness and equity for families. One of the primary schools in the town will not operate a catchment area from 2026 and will prioritise applicants on distance after the sibling criterion. The other primary school has a catchment area which serves the whole town of Biggleswade therefore enabling children from across the town to be considered for a place.
32. The removal of the catchment area for both sites at St. Andrews was discussed to better align the school's admissions oversubscription criteria with the other schools in the town and provide a clear, fair and equitable criteria for families. The proposed criteria that prioritise siblings after looked after/previously looked after children and children of staff. This enables younger siblings to access the same education provision

as their older sibling(s) and helps with family logistics of having children of the same age range in the same school.

33. After the prioritisation of siblings, priority will be given to children whose parents are living in the ecclesiastical parish of St Andrew's Biggleswade and attending a Church of England or other Christian church within the same parish. The definition of attendance for this criterion is defined as a parent/carer who has attended a Church of England or other Christian church within the same parish once a month for the period of one year prior to the application being made. This criterion is being proposed as the school provides a Church of England faith-based education which some parents choose on this basis.
34. After the faith criterion, the final criterion would be any other children and applicants in this criterion would be ordered in accordance with their straight-line distance from their home address to the designated measuring point to the school.
35. Below is the proposed admissions oversubscription criteria for the academic year 2027-2028:

St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School. PAN: 120 (60 East site, 60 West site)

1. All looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear to the Council to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. Children of staff.
3. Children who have a sibling at the school.
4. Children who are living in the ecclesiastical parish of St Andrew's Biggleswade and whose parent/carer has attended a Church of England or other Christian church within the same parish at least once a month for the period of one year prior to the application being made.
5. Any other children.

36. The Headteacher, Governing Body and the Diocese are supportive of the proposed admissions criteria for the academic year 2027-28.

Options for consideration

37. The options for the Executive Committee to consider are outlined above in relation to three of the Council's schools, one of which is a Community school and the other two being Voluntary Controlled schools.
38. These options have been produced in collaboration with the Headteacher and Governing bodies of the school's concerned and in relation to the two voluntary controlled schools, the Diocese has also been involved in ensuring that the proposals are aligned with the philosophy of their Education Board.

Reason/s for decision

39. The Council is required to consult on changes to its admission arrangements where changes are proposed and is required to consult within the statutory timescales set out in the School Admissions Code.
40. A decision is required from the Executive to approve the commencement of the Council's consultation on the proposed reduction of the published admissions number at Shillington Lower School and to agree with the proposed changes to the admission arrangements of St. Andrew's CofE VC Primary School and Edward Peake CofE VC Secondary School and agreed to the commencement of the consultation of these.

Council priorities

41. The Council's Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme and admission arrangements for Community and VC schools supports the Council's priority to improve educational attainment and supports the core aim of the Council's Strategic Plan to create opportunities for all children and young people to reach their full potential.

Legal Implications

42. The Council is legally required to consult on proposed changes to its admission arrangements for the 2027-28 academic year for community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools as the Council is the admission authority for these schools.
43. The Council is also responsible for coordinating admissions to schools, which is a requirement in The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012; and applies to applications made by Central Bedfordshire parents for all maintained schools and academies at the normal age of entry (except special schools and nurseries).
44. As the admission authority for Community and VC schools in its area, the Council is required by Section 88C (1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to determine, on an annual basis (before the beginning of each school year), the admission arrangements which are to apply to such schools for the next school year. Accordingly, for September 2027 admissions, the Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for Community and VC schools by 28th February 2026.
45. Before determining admission arrangements, the Council is required by Section 88C(2) of the 1998 Act to carry out such consultation if changes are proposed as prescribed in regulations, in this case, Chapter 3, Part 2 of the School Admissions Regulations, and the School Admissions Code of which prescribes, amongst other matters, the persons who must be consulted, the manner of consultation and the time for consultation and determination of admission arrangements. Consultation on these arrangements must take place for a minimum of a six-week period between 1st October and 31st January.
46. The Council is required to have a coordinated scheme for admissions in the relevant area and must formulate, in relation to each academic year, a qualifying scheme in relation to each primary and secondary school in their area under Chapter 6, Part 3 of the School Admission Regulations.
47. A failure to consult on proposed changes and determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the area would amount to a breach by the Council of these duties and the Council will not meet its statutory duty to have admission arrangements which meet the requirements of the School Admissions Code

2021. The possible implications of which include an objection being made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator as outlined in Chapter 6 of the School Admissions Regulations.

48. Accordingly, it is essential that the Council determines the admission arrangements for Community and VC schools in its area in accordance with the School Admissions Code and the regulations which underpin this.

Financial and Risk Implications

49. There are no financial implications.

Equalities and Fairness Implications

50. School Admission Arrangements, the Co-ordinated Scheme and relevant area it applies to for admission are governed by statute, statutory regulation and a Code of Practice (the School Admissions Code) and are required to meet all legislative requirements of equality legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
51. Central Bedfordshire Council is 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 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it.
52. The School Admissions Code sets out the duty of local authorities and admission authorities to produce admission arrangements which are fair, clear and objective and can be easily understood by parents. Admission arrangements must comply with regulations and legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
53. As part of the determination process, the Council will ensure the proposed admission arrangements do not have a disproportionate or negative impact on vulnerable groups. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed.

Biodiversity and Sustainability Implications

54. The broader definition of sustainability as defined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), which underpins the council's approach to sustainability, includes the provision of quality education. The admissions policy and related arrangements ensure that every child can access education with a suitable school place.
55. The local authority must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective.
56. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.

Other Corporate Implications

57. The proposals support the Council's 2050 Vision. The vision of living in thriving communities and how this beneficial growth is achieved by carefully planning where and how we grow enabling the right infrastructure to enable residents to access education.

Conclusion and next steps

58. The Executive is asked to approve the proposed admission arrangements for the academic year 2027/2028 and for these to be consulted. The consultation must take place for a minimum of 6 weeks. It is therefore proposed that the consultation commences on 22nd October 2025 and concludes on 3rd December 2025.

59. The Council is required to formulate a coordinated scheme for the points of entry for admission in the determination year. The proposed coordinated admissions scheme has been drawn up with regard to the national closing and offer dates for the academic year of 2027/28, taking into account the necessary timescales to process and allocate places working with schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire to meet required deadlines.

60. A report will then come back to the Executive on 3rd February for members to consider recommendations to approve.

Appendices

Appendix A: CBC Community and VC Admission Arrangements 2027-28.

Appendix B: Infant, Lower, Primary, Junior and Middle Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-28.

Appendix C: Secondary and Upper Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-28.

Appendix D: CofE Religious Confirmation form 2027-28

Appendix E: Catholic Religious Confirmation form 2027-28

Report author(s):

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