

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th January 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Children’s Services

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People

SUBJECT: School Admission Arrangements 2026/27

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report fulfils the Local Authority’s statutory requirement to consult upon and then determine the admission arrangements to Halton’s community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority is the Admission Authority, and to fulfil the statutory requirement to determine Coordinated Admission Schemes for admission to all primary and secondary schools in Halton including Academy, Free School and Voluntary Controlled schools, for the September 2026 intake.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approves the attached Coordinated Scheme for Admission to Primary Schools – which also contains the Local Authority’s admissions criteria to community and voluntary controlled schools and approves the Coordinated Scheme for Admission to Secondary Schools, both of which will apply to the September 2026 intake.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 On the 1st October 2024 Halton Local Authority commenced a statutorily required consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and co-ordinated admission schemes for the September 2026 intake to Primary Schools (attached as Appendix 1) and Secondary Schools (attached as Appendix 2). The Primary Scheme also included the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority is the admission authority. No amendments to the oversubscription criteria were suggested as the criteria work well and meet the requirements of the Department for Education’s School Admissions Code.

3.2 The full consultation was available on the Council’s website for parents and carers and any other interested party, and details of the consultation were issued to: all schools for sharing with parents, carers, staff and governing boards, Diocesan Authorities responsible for voluntary aided schools in Halton, all schools in Halton who are their own admission authority (academies, free schools and voluntary aided schools), and to all neighbouring local authorities.

- 3.3 The consultation ran until 12th November 2024 and no changes were proposed to the current oversubscription criteria for admission to Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled primary schools. All secondary schools in Halton are academies or voluntary aided meaning they are their own admission authority and responsible themselves for consulting and determining their own admissions criteria and their own Published Admission Number (PAN), and any proposed changes they wish to make must be consulted upon and determined in accordance with the statutory requirements regarding consultation and determination detailed in the Department for Education School Admissions Code 2021.
- 3.4 The consultation advised that there would be no individual response to any submissions made, but any relevant responses received would be shared with and considered by the Council's Executive Board. No responses were received to the consultation.
- 3.5 With regard to the purpose of the consultation that took place, all admission authorities – the Local Authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, and the Governing Boards/Trusts for academies, free school and voluntary aided schools, must ensure that the admission arrangements determined are fair, clear and objective, and fully comply with all statutory requirements. The arrangements proposed by the Council for admission to community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2026/27 academic year reflect those requirements.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Admissions Policy has been drawn up to maximize parental preference for Halton Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled schools. The oversubscription criteria detailed for community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority is the admissions authority, reflect the criteria which are considered good practice and acceptable by the Department for Education.
- 4.2 With regard to the Coordinated Admissions Schemes for admission to primary and secondary schools, parents/carers are invited to express a preference (or preferences) for any school for the relevant age group, and must complete an application form (online or paper version) which allows them the opportunity to express those preferences. If the school of preference is undersubscribed then all applications will be successful. If the school is oversubscribed then the oversubscription criteria will be applied and places allocated in accordance with the relevant criteria. The Council applies the admissions criteria determined for community and voluntary controlled schools to applications for those schools, and the Admission Authority (Governing Board/Trust) for academy, free school and voluntary aided schools apply their criteria for admission and notify the Local Authority of the outcome of those applications. The Local Authority then communicates those decisions to parents/carers on behalf of all schools on the relevant (statutory) notification date.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The proposed admission arrangements generally support the attendance of local residents to local schools, which allows for pupils to walk to school (accompanied if necessary/appropriate) helping to improve their health and wellbeing and leading towards them ultimately being able to walk to school themselves where they are able to do so, thereby supporting their independence.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Educational achievement is critical to the life chances of all children in the borough, and the school admission arrangements to community and voluntary controlled schools in Halton underpin the requirement to promote fair access to educational opportunity which in turn supports children, young people and their families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The proposed admission arrangements comply with statutory requirements for local authorities who are the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, in ensuring that the admission arrangements to community and voluntary controlled schools are fair and do not disadvantage, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with disability or special educational needs.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The School Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools are aligned to the Council's School Transport policies which promote and support measures that encourage local communities to use environmentally sustainable forms of travel, especially walking, cycling, and public transport.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools are proposed to maximise parental preference to those schools. Any amendment to the current arrangements at this time may reduce parental preference and lead to an increased number of admission appeals, adversely affecting the intake at some schools. The coordinated schemes for admission to primary and secondary schools are proposed to ensure that the statutory requirement to have such schemes in place is met.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The proposed admission arrangements reflect any requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Effective school admission arrangements should assist in allowing children and young people to access local school provision through sustainable modes of transport, e.g. walking, cycling or using public transport.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 Local Authorities as the admission authority for community and voluntary schools are required to consult and then determine their admission arrangements annually, and are also required to determine coordinated schemes for primary and secondary admission rounds that apply to all schools.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 None.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The implementation date is September 2025 which is when the timetabled process for the September 2026 intake commences.

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Department for Education School Admissions Code 2021	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West