



CABINET – 7 FEBRUARY 2025

LEICESTERSHIRE'S POLICY ON ADMISSIONS TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for changes to school admission arrangements from September 2026 that include the reduction in admission numbers at two primary schools, two junior schools, and one infant school in Leicestershire: Stathern Primary School, St. Mary's CE Primary School (Hinckley), Burbage Junior School, St. Denys CE Infant School, Ibstock, and Ibstock Junior School.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the changes to admissions arrangements at Stathern Primary School, St. Mary's CE Primary School (Hinckley), Burbage Junior School, St. Denys CE Infant School, Ibstock, and Ibstock Junior School as set out in paragraph 24 of this report are approved.

Reason for Recommendations

3. Reduction of admission numbers at the five schools will ensure infant class size compliance and protect schools from an anticipated deficit budget position which would otherwise arise due to low numbers entering the primary school system.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The County Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for such schools in Leicestershire from September 2026 by 28 February 2025 and make them available on the Council's website no later than 15 March 2025. This will then provide all parents and carers with more than a year's notice to allow them to make informed preferences when applying for a school place for autumn 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. The County Council's policy in this area is relevant to admissions to community schools, voluntary controlled schools, and those academies that wish to model their policy on the Local Authority's policy. The policy must contain clear criteria

for parents' requests for school places, and all applications must be treated fairly, regardless of whether or not the applicants live in Leicestershire. To this end, the County Council must have regard to the Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code (September 2021) and the Appeals Codes (October 2022). The Council also has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure the availability of sufficient school places in its area.

6. The changes planned align with the Council's Strategic Plan (2022/26) as they will improve the likelihood of local children securing local school places. This will in turn reduce the need for the Council to transport children to schools much further away. It will also ensure new future communities will have access to local schools, building positive local relationships.
7. The current School Admissions policy for admissions to mainstream schools was approved by the Cabinet on 9 February 2024.

Resource Implications

8. There are no resource implications arising from this report. The cost of administering the admission arrangements is borne from within existing budgets.
9. There would be a significant financial risk to the Council if admission numbers are not reduced as recommended as the financial burden to rectify a class size breach would fall on the Council.
10. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. All Elected Members will be advised once the Policy has been published on the Council's website. Elected Members for the divisions affected by the admission number reductions have been directly advised regarding the proposals and will be sent this report.

Mr. B. Lovegrove CC – Belvoir
 Mr. S. L. Bray CC – St Mary's
 Mr. B. Walker CC – Burbage
 Mr. D. Harrison CC – Ibstock and Appleby

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PART B

Background

11. The School Admissions Policy sets out the Council's admission arrangements for the purposes of allocating school places at community and voluntary controlled schools within Leicestershire, for which the Council is the admission authority. The Policy does not apply to other schools, including those within other local authority areas (including Leicester), voluntary aided schools, free schools, independent schools, academies, studio schools or admission to post-16 education.
12. Leicestershire's current Admissions Policy was approved by the Cabinet in February 2024. Since then, the need to reduce admission numbers have developed that need to be addressed to ensure parents continue to receive a positive experience when seeking a school place.

Proposed Changes

Reducing admission numbers

13. Leicestershire is experiencing low birth rates, as a consequence of which on national offer date this year the Authority had over 1,500 surplus school places. This is the second year that there has been a significant surplus, and the trend is likely to continue for further two to three years before births increase. The changes will help avoid schools falling into a negative budget position and ensure the Council does not breach the infant class size legislation. It was proposed to reduce the admission numbers at five Leicestershire primary schools:-
 1. Stathern Primary School (from 17 to 15) - permanent reduction.
 2. Burbage Junior School (from 94 to 90) to correspond with Burbage CE Infant School - permanent reduction.
 3. St. Mary's CE Primary School, Hinckley (from 45 to 30) - temporary reduction.
 4. St. Denys CE Infant School, Ibstock (from 90 to 60) - temporary reduction.
 5. Ibstock Junior School (from 90 to 60 from entry 2029) - temporary reduction.

The temporary reductions would be until such time birth rates increase or as occupancy of new housing drives up the demand for school places.

14. There is no requirement to consult if the desire is to increase a school's admissions number except if it is a significant enlargement but an admitting authority must consult when reducing a school's admission number.
15. There would be a significant financial risk to the Council if admission numbers were not reduced as the financial burden to rectify a class size breach falls on the local authority. It is in the interest of good financial management to address such matters and take appropriate remedial steps. By acting now schools are

less likely to fall into a deficit budget position, that the Council would have to absorb.

Consultation

16. The School Admission consultation process is defined by the National School Admissions Code 2021 and requires all admitting authorities to run a public consultation for a minimum of six calendar weeks between 1 October to 31 January each year. All changes must then be ratified by the Cabinet by 28 February the following year. Leicestershire's consultation was launched on 11 November 2024 and ran until 23 December 2024. The process requires that the following individuals and groups are consulted:
- a) Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
 - b) Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
 - c) All other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
 - d) Whichever of the governing body and the local authority who are not the admission authority;
 - e) Any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority.
17. All schools in Leicestershire, all Early Years' providers and neighbouring authorities were emailed directly as were the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses. The Council ran a local media campaign to raise awareness.
18. The consultation sought feedback on the admission number reductions to the five schools. Appendix B details the consultation responses and a summary is given below.
19. By the close of the consultation, the Council had received a total of 43 responses. The response rate was relatively low, probably as the changes being sought were not considered significant. The responses received were largely positive or neutral:

Proposal 1:	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Permanently reduce the admission number at Stathern Primary School (from 17 to 15)	21 (50%)	3 (7%)	6 (14%)	0	2 (5%)	10 (24%)

Proposal 2	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Permanently reduce the admission number at Burbage Junior School (from 94 to 90)	6 (19%)	1 (3%)	6 (19%)	0	2 (&%)	16 (52%)

Proposal 3	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Temporary reduction in the admission number at St Mary's CE Primary School (Hinckley)(from 45 to 30)	5 (16%)	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	0	2 (7%)	16 (52%)

Proposal 4	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Temporary reduction in the admission number at St Denys CE Infant School (from 90 to 60)	9 (28%)	3 (9%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	9 (28%)	7 (22%)

Proposal 5:	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Temporary reduction in the admission number at Ibstock Junior School (from 90 to 60 from entry 2029) as the children from St Denys CE PS (which is the linked infant school) filter through.	8 (24%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	10 (30%)	9 (27%)

Conclusion

20. It is important that the admissions policy and co-ordinated schemes are applied fairly and consistently, and appropriately that reflect the legal obligations placed on the Local Authority.
21. In terms of the reduction in admission numbers it is either to ensure legal compliance or to prevent schools falling into a deficit budget. The majority of responses support the rationale for the reductions, and these will be implemented.
22. The majority views in response to the reduction at Ibstock Junior School did not support the reduction to 60. The number was reconsidered and the governors have agreed to smaller reduction, to drop the admission number from 90 to 70.
23. This means for entry 2026 at first time the admissions numbers at the following schools will be reduced to:-
 - Stathern Primary School will reduce from 17 to 15 (permanent);
 - Burbage Junior School will reduce from 94 to 90 (permanent);
 - St. Mary's CE Primary School will reduce from 45 to 30 (temporary);
 - St. Denys CE Infant School will reduce from 90 to 60 (temporary);
 - Ibstock Junior School will reduce from 90 to 70 (temporary).
24. The proposed changes will help ensure that Local Authority policy and arrangements comply with the National School admissions Code 2021 and offers best choice and access to Leicestershire schools for children and young people.

Equality Implications

25. The Equality Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix C to this report, shows the benefits would be positive, as the policy is applied in a fair and transparent manner, and where necessary specific protected characteristics are prioritised.

Human Rights Implications

26. There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

National School Admissions Code 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf

Report to the Cabinet on 9 February 2024 - Leicestershire's Policy on Admissions to Mainstream Schools: Determination of Admission Arrangements

<https://cexmodgov01/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7503&Ver=4>

Appendices

- Appendix A - School Admissions Policy and Co-ordinated Schemes for entry from 2026
- Appendix B - Consultation Responses
- Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment