

## The County Council proposes the following changes to its admission arrangements for 2022/23:

- To amend the wording and definition of Rule 5 for infant, first, primary, junior and middle schools to:  
*Children for whom it is the nearest school or academy. This includes all schools except those which allocate places on the basis of faith (membership or practice) before allocating on the basis of distance/location.*
- To clarify our policy on twins and multiple births by amending the definition to:  
*Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the admission authority will admit over the school's published admission number when a single twin/multiple birth child is allocated a place at a school.*
- To reduce the published admission number at Markyate Village School & Nursery.
- To maintain the existing relevant areas for consultation purposes.

## Background

### Definition of “Nearest” School

The county council currently prioritises children who live “nearest to the school” under Rule 5. A child’s nearest school can be any school or academy excluding those that prioritise children on the basis of faith.

Following discussions with the Diocese of St Albans, which represents all own admission authority Church of England (CofE) schools in Hertfordshire, it is proposed that Rule 5 is amended to include all schools and academies which prioritise children who live locally to the school before children of the relevant faith.

The new definition would be as follows:

*The definition of “nearest school” includes all schools except those which allocate places on the basis of faith (membership or practice) before allocating on the basis of distance/location.*

This will result in 23 CofE primary, first and junior schools (Appendix A – available on the website) in mostly rural locations being added to the “nearest school” definition if the proposal is taken forward.

The proposal is not entirely new ground as the current definition of “nearest” for primary schools in Hertfordshire already includes three CofE schools that do not use faith to prioritise applications; St Nicholas - Harpenden, Bishops Wood Junior - Tring and St Bartholomew’s – Wiggington.

It is also standard practice for the county council to allocate a child a faith school as a “non-ranked allocation” if that school is the nearest with an available place and it has not been possible to offer a preferred school.

Modelling (based upon the 2020 primary allocation round) has been undertaken and the impact upon allocations and satisfaction rates across the county is minimal (Appendix B – available on the website).

### **Multiple births**

The county council's current arrangements state that:

*“Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the admission authority will admit over the school's published admission number when a single twin/multiple birth child is allocated the **last place** at a school.*

There have been instances when one twin/multiple birth child has been allocated a place and the other(s) has not been, e.g. - a set of twins where one has an Education, Health and Care Plan and the other does not. In this scenario the twin with the EHCP would be offered a place under our current arrangements but, because they are not the last child allocated, the other twin would not.

The county council's view is that twins/multiple birth children should be offered places at the same school, if that is the wish of their parents/carers. Allocating a twin/multiple birth child a place 'over PAN' if their sibling has already been offered a place (regardless of the rule that place has been offered under) is the simplest way to achieve this aim. Therefore, it is proposed that the definition is amended as follows:

*“Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the admission authority will admit over the school's published admission number when a single twin/multiple birth child is allocated a place at a school.*

### **Relevant Areas**

The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 place a responsibility on Local Authorities (LA) to determine Relevant Areas, after due consultation. The purpose of these areas is to ensure that all admission authorities are properly consulted about the admission arrangements which affect them and the communities they serve. “Relevant Areas” for the purposes of consultation are reviewed every two years and consulted upon. Hertfordshire has not specifically consulted upon its Relevant Areas since 2017/18 and, although no changes are proposed, consultation is now proposed to ensure transparency going forward.

There are currently twenty Relevant Areas within Hertfordshire (Appendix C – available on the website) which were developed in accordance with the following principles:

- they should reflect the pattern of allocation from primary to secondary school,
- they should reflect travel to school patterns and geographical proximity,
- they should be as small as practicable in order to reduce bureaucracy on schools.

### **Published Admission Numbers (PANs)**

The School Admissions Code only requires public consultation when it is proposed to lower a school's Published Admission Number (PAN).

It is proposed that the PAN for Markyate Village School & Nursery is reduced from 45 to 30 places to ensure the future financial viability and stability of the school. The PAN reduction has been requested, and is supported by, the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school.

Consultation on the PAN reduction will be undertaken in in Relevant Area 7 - Harpenden, Redbourn, Wheathampstead & surrounding areas including Markyate, Flamstead & Kimpton.

In recent years all families who have applied for places at Markyate Village School have been able to obtain places, and it is anticipated that this will remain the case after the PAN reduction. A reduction in PAN would still leave sufficient places available in the locality. The governors at the school support the reduction in the PAN, as lower pupil numbers (just over 30 in recent year) have resulted in challenging class organisation due to infant class legislation, tight budgets and potential deficits moving forwards.

The county council, as required by the School Admissions Code, will also consult the governing bodies of each community and voluntary controlled school in Hertfordshire on the proposal to maintain or raise the PAN for their school.

It is proposed that PANs for all other community and voluntary controlled schools in Hertfordshire for 2022/23 are retained. PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools are available at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions2022](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions2022)