

## **Consultation on Proposed Admission Arrangements for Lewisham Community Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools, including Sixth Form for the 2025/26 Academic Year**

Lewisham is consulting on the following:

1. The proposal to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Kelvin Grove Primary School for entry into the reception class from September 2025.
2. The proposal to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Deptford Park Primary School for entry into the reception class from September 2025.
3. Views being sought on whether Lewisham should include the priority criterion of children of staff for Lewisham community schools.

### **Proposal to reduce PANs at Kelvin Grove and Deptford Park Primary Schools**

Comments are invited on all elements of the arrangements but would be particularly welcomed in respect of the following proposal to reduce the published admission number (PAN) for entry in the reception class from September 2025 in Kelvin Grove Primary School and Deptford Park Primary School. Kelvin Grove Primary School current PAN is 90. Proposed PAN from September 2025 is 60. Deptford Park Primary School current PAN is 90, proposed PAN from September 2025 is 60.

**Rational:** The declining demand for school places has meant that Kelvin Grove and Deptford Park Primary Schools have not received a sufficient number of pupils to utilise all of their available forms of entry. A reduction in PAN will enable them to plan with greater certainty in terms of staffing, curriculum delivery and financial viability.

### **Proposal to introduce children of teaching staff as a priority criterion for Lewisham community schools.**

Priority to children of staff will be given only where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. The member of staff must be employed on at least a 0.6 full time equivalent (FTE) basis and employed directly at the school (rather than through an agency or third-party organisation). Priority of admission will only be given for the community school at which the member of staff is working. The number of places offered under this criterion will be limited to a maximum of one place per Form of Entry (FE) at each school.

**Rationale:** The 2021 Admissions Code (paragraph 1.39) allows admissions authorities to give priority to children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances:

- a) Where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or
- b) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

Paragraph 1.40 states that: Admissions authorities must specify in their admission arrangements how this priority will be applied, for example, which groups of staff it will apply to.

#### **Areas for consideration:**

- The Royal Borough of Greenwich is consulting on the inclusion of children of staff, as a priority criterion for community school for 2025/26.
- The London Borough of Bexley uses children of staff as a criterion for its primary community schools. All its secondary schools are academies.
- The London Borough of Lambeth currently uses children of staff criterion for its community schools.
- The London Borough of Croydon do not have children of staff as a criterion.
- The London Borough of Bromley has no community schools.

#### **Pros**

- The introduction of children of staff could act as a recruitment and retention strategy in Lewisham.
- Many Lewisham staff live out of borough and schools report that they lose valuable staff where their child is not able to be offered a school place.
- Staff work harder and are more committed to a school where their children attend.
- Governors and the SLT would welcome the addition of children of staff as a priority to negate associated costs and impact on the school, particularly in the recruitment crisis.
- Lewisham community schools would be on a level playing field with other boroughs.

#### **Cons:**

- There is no requirement on Local Authorities /schools to adopt such a priority,
- Local children may be disadvantaged by being placed in a school further from their home address if children of staff are given priority.
- Children who obtain a place at the school under the children of staff priority may disadvantage local children in the future, if their siblings are also given priority. However, this is a sibling rule that applies to all children.

## What will happen next:

Once the consultation is complete, the proposal will be sent to the Mayor and Cabinet who will have the final decision on whether:

- The children of staff priority criterion will be adopted in Lewisham's determined arrangements from 2025/26 onwards.
- The reduction of PAN at Kelvin Grove Primary School is agreed to be permanently reduced from 90 to 60, from September 2025/26 onwards.
- The reduction of PAN at Deptford Park Primary School is agreed to be permanently reduced from 90 to 60, from September 2025/26 onwards.

If the children of staff criterion is adopted, then over-subscription for Lewisham community schools would be applied as below:

1. **A 'looked after child'** or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order. A looked after child is a child who is a) in the care of a local authority, or b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989). Details must be supplied by the allocated social worker or foster carer. The 2021 School Admissions Code (the Code) requires children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted to be given equal first priority in admission arrangements, alongside looked after children (LAC) and children who were previously looked after by English local authorities (PLAC). This advice refers to these children as internationally adopted previously looked after children – "IAPLAC".
2. **Medical/Social** - In exceptional circumstances there is discretion to admit children on the grounds of their or their family's severe medical or social need for that particular school and who would not otherwise qualify for admission. The application must be supported by a letter from a hospital consultant, social worker or similar professional, setting out the reasons why the school is the only one to meet the child's needs, before an admission decision is made. The admission decision will be considered in consultation with a panel of teaching and medical professionals. Medical professionals provide advice on applications made under medical conditions and teaching professionals advise on applications made for social or special reasons. Supporting evidence must be provided before the closing date for applications. Lewisham has a military covenant that enhances services offered by the Council to ex / serving military and their extended families, all applications for school places for the children of full-time service personnel are prioritised under the 'exceptional medical or social' criterion under for Lewisham's community school. If the child is in Key Stage 1, where infant class size legislation applies, the child can be placed as an 'exception' as detailed in the School Admissions Code
3. **Sibling**: Children whose brother or sister is on roll of the school on the closing date for applications and is expected to be on the roll of the school (or of the

junior school in the case of separate infant and junior schools\*), at the intended date of admission. Children in Year 6 who will have transferred to secondary school by the time the younger child is admitted do not confer sibling priority. If the school is over-subscribed entirely with siblings, priority will be given to:

i) those with an exceptional social or medical need (see 2 above) and then to

those who are permanently living nearest to the school (see 4 below). this applies to children attending Stillness Infant and Junior Schools. Siblings include all blood or adoptive siblings, half-siblings, foster siblings of Looked After Children and step siblings. Siblings must all live at the same address as the child applying. Proof of the sibling relationship may be required.

4. **Children of staff** - Priority to children of staff will be given only where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
5. **Children living nearest to the school.** All distances will be measured to a central nodal point in the school premises, using digitised mapping software of the area, from a nodal point in the applicant's permanent home address. If more than one applicant lives in a multi-occupancy building (e.g., flats) priority will be given to the applicant whose door number is the lowest numerically and/or alphabetically.

The deadline for responses to the consultation is **4pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024** and the responses should be submitted to [schooladmissions@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@lewisham.gov.uk), with the subject heading **Admissions Consultation 2025/26**.