Consultation on proposed Admission Arrangements for Aspire Educational Trust for entry into Reception from September 2028

Introduction

The Aspire Educational Trust is the admission authority for the schools named below:

Ash Grove Academy
Broad Oak Primary School
Hollinhey Primary School
Holmes Chapel Primary School
Hurdsfield Primary School
Ivy Bank Primary School
Parkroyal Community School
Peover Superior Endowed Primary School
Puss Bank School & Nursery
Sandbach Primary Academy
The Wilmslow Academy
Underwood West Academy
Victoria Road Primary School
Wilbraham Primary School

As admission authority, this means that The Aspire Educational Trust are responsible for the admission arrangements for these schools. When an admission authority wishes to make

changes to their admission arrangements, they must consult to ensure all views are heard. The Aspire Educational Trust is consulting on changes to the admission arrangements for the 14 schools within its MAT. This consultation invites you to give your views.

All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including information about what happens if there are more applications than places available (oversubscription criteria.)

All admissions authorities must include the oversubscription criteria in their arrangements. The criteria must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation.

It is for admission authorities to decide which criteria are most suitable for the school according to the local circumstances.

Proposed Changes to Admission Arrangements
The PAN is the number of children the school intends to admit into Reception each year.

1. **Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Wilbraham Primary School from 90 places to 60 places**
2. **Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Puss Bank School & Nursery from 60 to 30.**
3. **Increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Hurdsfield Primary School from 24 to 30**

Why are we proposing these changes?

1. **Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Wilbraham Primary School from 90 places to 60 places**

Over recent years, the number of children admitted to Reception at Wilbraham Primary School has been below the current PAN of 90. The school has seen a sustained reduction in Reception admissions, reflecting changes in local demand for school places.
Reception admissions over the last three academic years have been:

Academic Year	PAN	Reception Intake
2023-24	90	69
2024-25	90	58
2025-26	90	57

The average Reception intake over this period has been approximately 61 pupils.
The proposed reduction would align the school's admission arrangements more closely with current patterns of demand for places and projected pupil numbers. This would support effective planning of staffing, accommodation and resources whilst continuing to provide a high-quality educational experience for all pupils. The children in Reception and Year One are taught two different curriculums – The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the National Curriculum. In order to ensure that every child is taught the appropriate curriculum, in-line with other children in those year groups across the country, we teach all the Reception children together and don't mix any of them in a class with

Year One children. Due to the School Admissions Infant Class Size Regulations, children in Reception cannot be taught by a single teacher in classes that are larger than 30. Wilbraham Primary School remains committed to providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children. The proposal would help ensure that resources can continue to be targeted effectively to meet the needs of pupils and maintain high standards of teaching and learning across the school.

2. Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Puss Bank School & Nursery to 30.

In recent years, Puss Bank School & Nursery has experienced a decline in pupil admissions, reflecting the reduction in birth rates across the Macclesfield area. Current cohort sizes have range between 37 and 56 pupils, but more recent year groups have typically been below 45 pupils.

As a result, the school has increasingly operated mixed-age classes. However, when cohort sizes fall below 45, maintaining a mixed-age structure becomes financially challenging within the constraints of current school funding. To ensure that we can continue to deliver a high-quality curriculum and make effective use of available resources, we are proposing to reduce our Published Admission Number (PAN) to 30.

Reception and Year 1 pupils follow different statutory curricula: Reception pupils are taught the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, while Year 1 pupils follow the National Curriculum. To ensure that all children receive teaching that is fully aligned with the expectations for their year group, we teach Reception pupils separately rather than combining them with Year 1 pupils in a mixed-age class.

In addition, the Infant Class Size Regulations limit Reception and Key Stage 1 classes to a maximum of 30 pupils per teacher. In many schools, this means that one teacher is allocated to every 30 pupils. At Puss Bank School & Nursery, however, Reception provision requires two teachers for cohorts of up to 60 pupils, even when actual pupil numbers are considerably lower. In some years, Reception cohorts have been as small as 40 pupils. This staffing requirement places significant pressure on the school's budget and limits the resources that could otherwise be directed towards enhancing provision and outcomes across the wider school.

Reducing the PAN to 30 would better align admission numbers with local demand, support the long-term financial sustainability of the school, and enable us to continue providing the highest possible standard of education for all pupils.

3. Increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Hurdsfield Primary School to 30

We propose to increase the PAN from 24 to 30. Following the acquisition of additional accommodation within the school, we now have the capacity to safely and effectively accommodate 30 pupils in each year group without compromising the quality of education, pastoral support, or access to facilities.

This proposal also aligns with wider pupil place planning across the Trust. The concurrent reduction in the PAN at our neighbouring school, Puss Bank Primary School, means that, collectively, the two schools will offer 60 places per year group, representing an overall reduction of 30 places across the Trust schools in Macclesfield. This adjustment reflects declining birth rates and the Local Authority's pupil projections over the next five years, which indicate a continued reduction in demand for primary school places.

By increasing the PAN at this school while reducing it at Puss Bank Primary School, the Trust will be better placed to respond to parental preference and ensure that available capacity is aligned with local demand. This approach will help to minimise surplus places, make more effective use of the accommodation available across both schools, and maintain financially sustainable class structures.

The proposed change will support the long-term sustainability of both schools by enabling a more balanced distribution of pupils across the two sites, maximising the efficient use of resources while continuing to deliver high-quality education and support for all children. Furthermore, it will provide greater flexibility in meeting the needs and preferences of local families, ensuring that school places remain available where demand is greatest.

Copies of the proposed arrangements can be obtained from the Aspirer Educational Trust website https://www.aspireeducationaltrust.co.uk/page/?title=Admissions&pid=73

What would be the impact if these proposed changes were approved?

- The Published Admission Number for Reception would reduce from 90 to 60 places.
- There would be no change to the school's admissions policy or oversubscription criteria.
- Children living in the school's catchment area would continue to have the opportunity to apply for a place in accordance with the published admissions arrangements.
- The proposal would not affect pupils already attending the school.
- The school would continue to serve its local community and maintain its commitment to inclusive practice and high-quality education for all pupils.

Who are we consulting with?

According to the School Admissions Code 2021 1.47:
Admission authorities must consult with: 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 is not the admission authority; e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority;

How can you respond?

We would like to hear your views on these proposals. Responses should be sent in writing. Please send any comments regarding the above proposed changes by emailing Rach Swann at rswann@aet.cheshire.sch.uk
Please mark your email AET PRIMARY AND NURSERY CONSULTATION

If you have any trouble with responding to the consultation, or require accessibility adjustments to access any of the information, please let us know on rcswann@aet.cheshire.sch.uk and we will be happy to help.

The consultation takes place between 13th November 2026 and 25th December 2026.

All responses must be received before 23.59 on 25th December 2026. Due to the need for us to consider the responses and make changes as necessary, we will unfortunately be unable to consider responses received after this time.

What happens next?
After the close of the consultation, the responses will be collated and presented to the Audit and Resources Committee at the Aspire Educational Trust who will decide whether or not to proceed with the proposed changes and determine the admission arrangements. The outcome of the consultation will be published on the school website as soon as possible once we have reached a decision, and the final admissions arrangements will follow shortly after. Hard copies of the final arrangements and consultation outcome will be made available upon request to all respondents of the consultation.

This consultation document applies to all Academies of the Aspire Educational Trust