



Consultation to reduce the PAN at Walmsley CE Primary School

Background

The current Published Admission Number (PAN) at Walmsley CE Primary School is 45. This means that the number of children admitted to the school in Reception each year is a maximum of 45.

The Governing Board at Walmsley CE Primary are proposing to reduce the PAN to 30.

This proposal would mean that the maximum number of pupils intended to be admitted in Reception in 2026, and all subsequent Reception cohorts, will be 30. For children who already have a place at the school in other year groups there will be no change.

Currently, the net capacity of the school is 340, made up of 45 places in each year from Reception to Year 6 with the exception of Year 5 which has 60 places. However, currently there are 322 children on roll due to a decrease in pupil numbers over the past 3 years.

When planning primary school places, Bolton Council is split into 5 primary school planning areas. Walmsley CE Primary sits in the North and Central planning area which consists of Astley Bridge, Bromley Cross, Halliwell and Heaton. The North and Central planning area has seen a decrease in pupil numbers in recent years (apart from in Astley Bridge) and this trend is expected to continue. Simply put there are more school places in the area than potential students.

According to data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the number of live births nationally has fallen for five consecutive years, with the total number of live births in 2020 being the fewest since 2002. Given the falling number of births nationally and across Bolton, we do not anticipate that the numbers of children requiring school places in the North and Central planning area will increase significantly in the near future.

Walmsley CE Primary currently has 18 surplus places (there are currently 42 children on roll in Reception).

Current published forecasts indicate that the numbers of Reception places required in Reception for the four intake years across North and Central planning area will continue to fall. This means the current surplus places at Walmsley CE Primary will not improve. The forecasts for Reception places needed over the next three years for Walmsley CE Primary are expected to be below the current PAN of 45.

The Governing Board has used the Local Authority Reception places forecast information to model the school budget over the next five years in order to make an informed decision on its future. The Governing Board has considered the following options:

a) Do nothing and keep the PAN at 45 – The Reception classes are not forecast to fill to 45 meaning the school will not receive the maximum funding to enable two classes in Reception and will result in a mixed reception/Year 1 class. Although the forecast indicates that Reception will not fill, there would be an expectation from the Local Authority that the school can still take up to 45 pupils throughout the whole intake year. This may result in a high number of in-year allocations that could potentially require changes to class organisation during the school year which is detrimental to the pupils and the school.

b) Reduce the PAN to 30, as detailed previously the Reception cohort is forecast to have a lower allocation in the forecast years (2025 -2028). By reducing the PAN there will be sufficient places to meet the forecasted demand for places within our locality.

The School Admissions Code requires that all admission authorities consult where they propose to reduce a PAN. Walmsley CE Primary Governing Board are therefore seeking representations on the proposed change to the PAN for Walmsley CE Primary in the North and Central planning area.

Specific proposal: Amend the PAN from 45 to 30

Walmsley CE Primary propose to reduce the PAN from 45 to 30 from 1st September 2026.

This means that the maximum number of pupils intended to be admitted in Reception in 2026 and all subsequent Reception cohorts, will be 30. For children who already have a place in the school there will be no change.

In accordance with the School Admissions Code (2021), the Governing Board at Walmsley CE Primary School are consulting with key stakeholders, including;

- Parents/carers of current pupils, past and prospective parents of pupils
- Christ Church Walmsley PCC and Manchester Diocese
- All other Admission Authorities within our locality
- Bolton Local Authority (school admissions team)
- Neighbouring LAs – Blackburn with Darwen
- Councillors and MPs
- Anyone else who has an interest in the proposed changes.

A copy of the proposal has been published the school website.

This consultation will run from Wednesday 10th December 2024 to Friday 31st January 2025 after which time any representations received will be considered and a report taken to the Governing Board for a decision to be made on the PAN for Walmsley CE Primary. Any questions in relation to the consultation should be sent to the school via the School contact email address. office@walmsley.bolton.sch.uk

Factors that have been considered by Walmsley CE Primary Governing Board when deciding to consult on these proposals include:

- A substantial portion of funding received by schools is directly related to the number of pupils attending the school. Too many pupil vacancies mean that the school will not receive the maximum possible revenue. Therefore, the school is proposing to reduce the number of available places to enable the school to operate more efficiently and cost effectively whilst not having a detrimental effect on the education it offers its pupils.
- The school is located in North and Central planning area where there continues to be a falling demand for primary school places, resulting in a significant surplus across the area. There are also lower numbers of younger children across the wider area, registered with the NHS who will require a school place over the coming years.
- The total number of pupils from Reception to Year 6 recorded by the school on the October 2024 census was 322, which is below the current capacity of 340 and there have been no in year admissions to date this academic year.
- Walmsley CE Primary Governors are more than willing to look creatively at solutions in conjunction with Bolton Local Authority in the future which may help to solve any problems resulting in a shortage of school places in the North and Central planning area e.g., a bulge year.

The Governing Board at Walmsley CE Primary believe that reducing the PAN will assist the school to provide stability in their long-term planning and allow them to deliver high quality educational outcomes for the pupils currently on roll and prospective pupils. The reduction in PAN will ensure that an appropriate number of places are provided for future pupils, in line with forecasts.



Resilience

Trust

Aspiration

Hope

Respect

Love