Appendix 4

Proposed change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Vernon Park Primary School

Stockport Council is consulting on a proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Vernon Park Primary School from 45 to 30 for admission to Reception from September 2028 onwards.

The proposal is driven by the forecast surplus of Reception places across the Offerton planning area and the resulting financial impact on schools.

From 2028/29 onwards, Offerton is forecast to have between 29 and 37 surplus Reception places each year, equivalent to approximately 12% to 15% of available capacity. Reducing Vernon Park's PAN by 15 would still leave between 14 and 22 surplus Reception places across the planning area, maintaining sufficient flexibility to respond to fluctuations in demand. There is also significant forecast surplus capacity in the neighbouring Stockport primary planning area, which is geographically close to Vernon Park.

For admission in September 2026, Vernon Park received 31 first-preference applications. A total of 34 places were offered on National Offer Day against a PAN of 45, of which nine were offered to children living within the school's catchment area. As at 19 October 2026, 38 children were on roll in Reception.

Forecast demand for Vernon Park remains above the proposed PAN of 30. The Council therefore recognises that reducing the PAN may mean that some applicants who might previously have secured a place at Vernon Park are offered an alternative school.

However, the Council must plan sufficient places across the wider planning area rather than at individual schools in isolation. The forecasts indicate that sufficient Reception capacity would remain across Offerton following the proposed reduction, alongside further capacity in the neighbouring Stockport planning area. The reduction would therefore bring available capacity more closely into line with forecast demand while retaining a reasonable level of surplus to accommodate fluctuations in pupil numbers.

Although forecasts cannot guarantee the number of applications received in any individual year, current projections indicate that Vernon Park would be expected to fill a PAN of 30 and may operate a waiting list. The proposal therefore reflects the level and distribution of capacity required across the wider area rather than a lack of demand for the school.

In considering where capacity could appropriately be reduced, the Council has considered forecast demand alongside the organisation and sustainability of individual schools. Reducing Vernon Park's PAN from 45 to 30 would establish a clear one-form-entry model, while retaining sufficient capacity across Offerton and the neighbouring Stockport planning area. The proposal therefore provides a practical way of reducing surplus capacity while maintaining flexibility to respond to changes in local demand.

A PAN of 45 represents one and a half forms of entry and can make class and staffing arrangements difficult where an intake exceeds 30 but does not generate sufficient pupil-led funding to support two full classes.

This is particularly relevant in Reception and Key Stage 1, where infant class size legislation limits classes containing a single qualified teacher to 30 pupils. If more than 30 pupils are

admitted, the school may need to organise the cohort across two smaller classes. Where the intake remains below 45, the additional pupil-led funding may not meet the full cost of operating a second class.

Reducing the PAN to 30 would allow Vernon Park to move progressively towards a one-form-entry structure as the new cohorts move through the school. This would support greater certainty over class organisation, staffing and financial planning.

While mixed-age classes can offer benefits in some circumstances, they can also create additional challenges where they arise because of pupil numbers rather than educational design. Staff may be required to plan, teach and assess the curriculum for two-year groups within one class. This can increase the complexity of curriculum planning and make it more difficult to provide age-appropriate teaching, support and intervention. A more stable one-form-entry structure would reduce the need to organise classes in this way and provide greater continuity for pupils and staff.

The school's recent budget review identified an unsustainable financial position, surplus places and staffing costs among the issues requiring consideration.

The proposed PAN reduction would not resolve the school's immediate financial position, as the benefits would arise gradually as each new cohort entered the school. However, it would support a clearer and more sustainable long-term structure, reducing the risk of maintaining underfilled classes and allowing resources to be planned more effectively.

The proposal relates only to the school's mainstream Reception PAN and would not change the organisation of the school's Speech and Language unit.