

## Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2021
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education
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Public/Private Document	Public

## Need for Primary School Places 2022-25

### Executive Summary

- 1.1 Nationwide there was a notable drop in applications for Primary school for the September 2021 intake. Birth rate data from 2016/17 indicated that Rochdale should have a peak in births for this intake, similar to that seen for the 2017/18 reception year intake. However, along with national trends, early indications are that Reception intakes have decreased and they are forecasted to continue to do so for the next few years. It is thought that school starts have been affected by both the pandemic (by stopping families from moving) and Brexit.
- 1.2 Inflows of pupils arriving into the borough after the start of Reception intake, and in higher year groups, have been higher than ever since January 2021, leading to significant pressures in older primary school year groups. These 'in-year' school applications plateaued towards the end of the 2019/20 due to the pandemic, but have bounced back up to be above previous levels.

### Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the opening of consultations for the provision of two new schools to be provided via the Free School Presumption route for Heywood South and Rochdale South. Details of the Free School Presumption are set out at section 4.17 onwards and detailed in the link at section 8 below.
- 2.2 Approve the bulge class at Hollin Primary School in Middleton for 2022 and 2023 school intakes as required.
- 2.3 Approve consultation with Middleton stakeholders to seek further temporary capacity for 2023/24 with the expectation of expansion of the Primary school estate through the Prescribed Alterations procedure (see link in section 8).
- 2.4 Note that falling birth rates nationally and in some areas within the borough (Rochdale NW) may require removal of some Primary school capacity. Any

consultation or decisions on this will be put before Cabinet for approval at a later date.

### Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The council has a statutory duty to provide education and school places to all school aged children living in the borough and consequently has a duty to plan adequately for predicted pupil numbers.
- 3.2 Under the Education Act 1996, section 14(1) the Local Authority has a duty to secure sufficient school places and is also the strategic commissioner for new school places in its area.
- 3.3 A local authority shall exercise their functions under this legislation to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education, and secondary education and, in the case of a local authority in England, further education, are available to meet the needs of the population of their area.
- 3.4 Current housing development plans along with possible housing allocations defined in the Places For Everyone, PFE (currently still under consultation) dictate that pupil numbers in Rochdale may continue to grow in some localities and plans must be put in place to create the needed school capacity.
- 3.5 Drops in applications for Reception intake following national trends have started to affect forecasts for some area, Rochdale NW in particular.

### Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 Heywood  
Heywood appears to have suffered a drop in applications along with national trends. It is not obvious whether this is temporary or more permanent issue. New housing completions in Heywood have decreased recently but 1200 new houses coming forward at the junction 19 'South Heywood' development will require a new school to be delivered through the Free School Presumption route. The estimated new pupils from this number of houses is 300. Timing of the new school will be crucial to maintain sufficient places as the housing comes forward in south Heywood. A consultation process on starting the Presumption process needs to be run to help inform the required school specification document, this is not the formal statutory consultation required to be undertaken under section 10 of the Academies Act 2010.

	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
<b>Reception Places Needed</b>	53 spare	35 spare	67 spare	78 spare

<b>Plans</b>	Discontinue bulge class at Harwood Park		Consideration must be taken on how much spare capacity is too much. Monitoring of the rate of building and pupils from the South Heywood development will inform any decision to reduce spare school capacity.
<b>Future Issues</b>			New housing coming forward in South Heywood will require a new 1 form entry school.

4.3 In-year new arrivals for Key Stage 2 have been an issue and Woodland Primary created an additional year 4 class in 2020.

#### Middleton

4.4 Forecasts show that in Middleton additional places are needed from 2022/23 to 2024/25. Middleton has high levels of in-flow and significant shortages of places are expected without additional capacity. During the 2020/21 academic year 34 additional pupils arrived on-roll in key stage 1 classes after the start of the school year just in Middleton.

	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
4.5 <b>Reception Places Needed</b>	10 places needed	51 places needed	5 place spare	40 spare
<b>Plans</b>	Provide a second and third year of temporary bulge classes at Hollin Primary			
<b>Future Issues</b>		Permanent expansion of school may be needed in central Middleton.		

4.6 In September 2018 and 2019 Reception year started with 62 and 85 spare places respectively. This amount of spare capacity caused significant issues with school financing locally. There are now 28 spare places in the 2018 intake and 55 spare places in the 2019 intake. It is important that sufficient classes are created at key stage 1 as class size legislation means that there is a limit to the number of places that can be offered in each class. Forecasts of in-year growth show that the 2019 intake, mentioned above, will have insufficient places by 2024/25 (in what will be year 5), with the 2018 intake having insufficient places in the 2023/24 year 5 class. The 2020 intake will have insufficient places by the start of the 2022/23 academic year. The table below shows almost all year groups in Middleton will have insufficient places going forward.

4.7 <b>MIDDLETON FORECAST</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
Year 1 places	705	675	675	675
Expected pupils	689	716	758	700
Year 2 places	675	705	675	675
Expected pupils	688	711	739	782
Year 3 places	675	675	705	675
Expected pupils	650	715	739	768
Year 4 places	705	675	675	705
Expected pupils	695	664	730	754

Year 5 places	675	705	675	675
Expected pupils	675	709	677	744
Year 6 places	720	675	705	675
Expected pupils	699	686	720	689

### Pennine

- 4.8 For the 2021 Reception intake for north Pennine the underlying birth rate was high, but schools appear to have under-recruited considerably. This could be due to national issues mentioned previously, or local issues. Local issues include the rebuilding programme at Littleborough Primary school and the continued lack of Secondary school places. Historically north Pennine is a net importer of children, with more children arriving in Reception than are born locally. There is an expectation that, when the Littleborough Primary re-build project is complete, and the new Secondary school is open, that families will have confidence to apply for school places in this area again.

		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
4.9	<b>Extra Reception Places Needed</b>	58 spare	59 spare	62 spare	69 spare
	<b>Plans</b>	Spare capacity will be kept under review, but temporary issues are thought to be impacting current applications and applications for the 2022/23 year will be monitored closely.			
	<b>Future Issues</b>	Littleborough Primary new build school and the new Secondary school, due to be opened in 2023/24, will impact on the desirability of places in this area. New housing is also coming forward.			
Pennines S	<b>Extra Reception Places Needed</b>	11 spare	34 spare	24 spare	29 spare
	<b>Plans/ Future issues</b>	Plans will remain under review			

### Rochdale

- 4.10 In the NE/NW area the combined excess of places is a concern, however applications from families new to Rochdale are an issue. New applications for places 'in-year' tend to be in the Rochdale NE and central areas and numbers of new applications for school places through the in-year process were larger last year than any year previously despite the ongoing pandemic (figure 1a and 1b below).

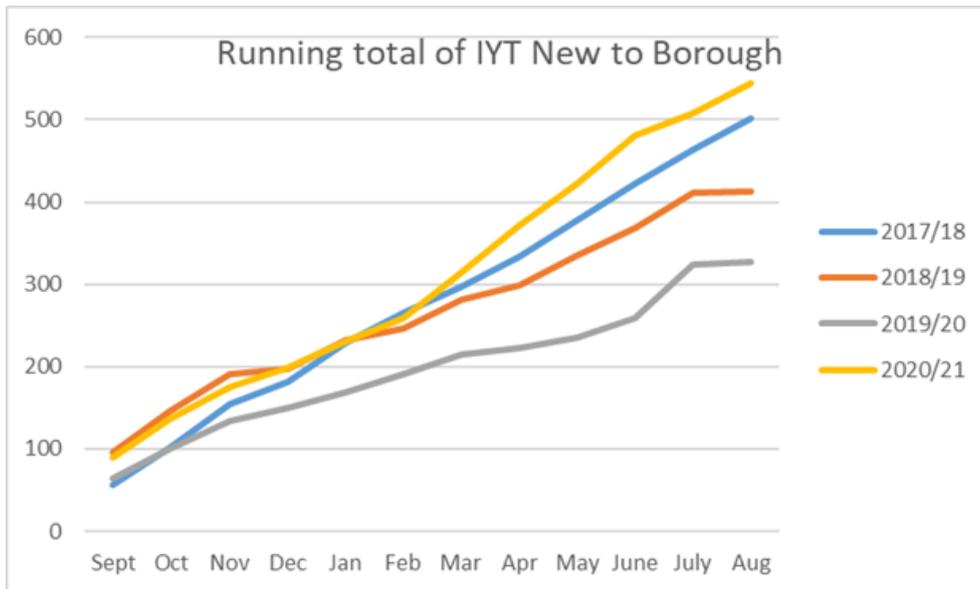
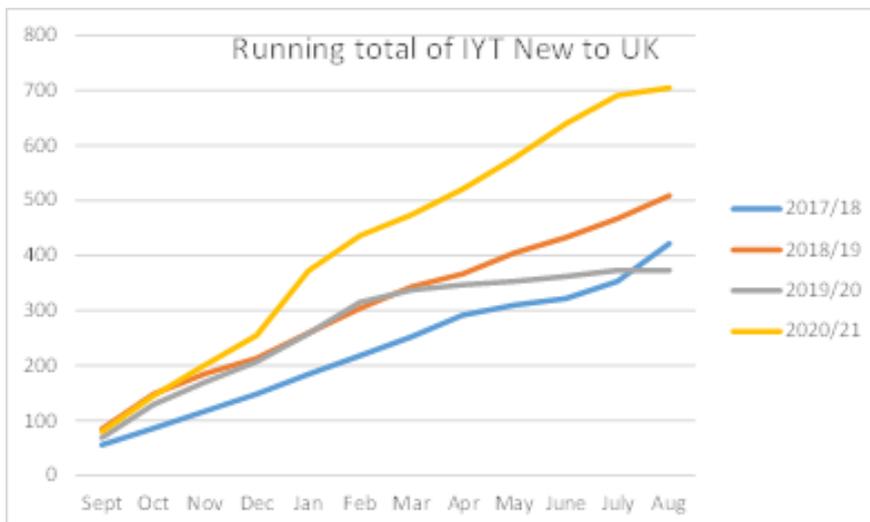


Figure 1a: The last 4 years of data on annual rates of applications for new school places from families new to the borough.



4.11 Figure 1b: The last 4 years of data on annual rates of applications for new school places from families new to the UK.

		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<b>NW and NE Rochdale</b>	<b>Extra Recepti on Places Needed</b>	8 spare (NE) 59 spare (NW)	53 spare (NE) 47 spare (NW)	27 spare (NE) 58 spare (NW)	39 spare (NE) 72 spare (NW)
	<b>Plans/ Future Issues</b>	NE area: Spare capacity will be reviewed, however high in-year admissions in NE Rochdale mean that spare capacity needed to accommodate in year moves. NW area: Spare capacity in Rochdale NW is too high			

4.12

In year applications in the Rochdale NE area are forecast to show schools filling to capacity (see table below). Some of these children will be offered places in the Rochdale NW area as travel to school distance will be within the statutory distance.

4.13

<b>ROCHDALE NE FORECAST</b>	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26

<b>Year 1 places</b>	429	429	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	431	437	391	418
<b>Year 2 places</b>	429	429	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	423	445	450	403
<b>Year 3 places</b>	429	429	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	403	433	455	461
<b>Year 4 places</b>	429	429	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	422	405	436	458
<b>Year 5 places</b>	459	429	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	444	431	414	445
<b>Year 6 places</b>	429	459	429	429
<b>Expected pupils</b>	431	456	443	426

4.14

In the south and central areas of Rochdale, underlying birth rates show a small peak for 2023/24 before declining in 2025/26. In-flows of children into the central area continue to be challenging, with schools being asked to take additional children in higher year classes. Housing developments in the south of the area have also impacted on the sufficiency of places. Timing of new housing developments and creation of sufficient places is going to be an issue going forward in the SW area and current forecasts of spare capacity will need to be reviewed. Housing plans under the Places for Everyone indicate an additional 1680 houses may come forward over the next 15 years. A new school will be needed depending on the speed of arrival of new housing and a consultation on this will need to be run.

4.15

		<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
<b>C and SW Rochdale</b>	<b>Extra Recepti on Places Needed</b>	33 spare (C) 42 spare (SW)	22 spare (C) 23 spare (SW)	32 spare (C) 36 spare (SW)	48 spare (C) 42 spare (SW)
	<b>Plans</b>	Spare capacity in the central zone will be kept under review but large numbers of in-year applications requires sufficient capacity			
	<b>Future Issues</b>	Additional housing developments in the south means a new school will be needed in the area in the long term. A new school will need to be created through the Presumption route.			

4.16

### **Summary**

- I. Start consultation on Presumption route for Heywood and Rochdale SW new schools.
- II. Extra capacity is needed in Middleton and the bulge class at Hollin will be continued and more capacity sought for 2023 which may involve school expansion.
- III. Investigate options for removing capacity in NW Rochdale if and when required.

4.17

### **Free School Presumption**

The Education Act 2011 changed the arrangements for establishing new schools and introduced section 6A (the 'free school presumption') of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires that, where a local authority identifies the need for a new school in its area, it must seek proposals

4.18 to establish an academy (free school) (See link in Section 8 below).

The presumption process requires local authorities to seek proposals to establish a free school where they have identified the need for a new school

4.19 in their area.

Section 19 of the guidance, The free school presumption Departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers, states "If a local authority is running a presumption competition, it can withdraw from the process if it determines that the need for a new school will be met by other means, or that

4.20 the need for a new school no longer exists".

Under the presumption route the local authority is responsible for providing the site for the new school and for delivering the capital programme for building the new school. The local authority is also responsible for meeting the associated capital and pre/post-opening revenue costs. Basic need capital funding is provided so that local authorities can provide the places that they

4.21 need, including through new presumption schools.

The decision on all new free school proposals lies with the Secretary of State.

4.22 **Alternatives Considered**

Alternatives are constantly under review and any impacts of the current pandemic on house building rates or timing of new developments will have knock on effects on school capacity.

- 5.1 The costs associated with co-ordinating admission arrangements are met from the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 5.2 Where applicable, schools offering additional pupil places to meet the LA's statutory need may also be eligible for additional revenue funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The policy and funding available for basic need growth has to be agreed with Schools Forum.
- 5.3 Schools are funded based on the number of pupils. Whilst it is acknowledged that a school will have some vacant places, a high number of vacant places in a single year group created if pupils do not materialise as forecast will have an adverse effect on a school's funding. This can be managed in the short term through the application of the Growth Fund policy but it is not sustainable longer term.
- 5.4 The local authority is required to pay all costs associated with setting up schools through the Free School Presumption route. Approval for costs associated with providing any new schools via this route, both capital and revenue costs, will be sought following consultation with stakeholders when a suggested opening date is agreed.
- 5.5 In relation to the Free School Presumption route, the DfE state in their guidance "Local authorities are able to opt out of the scheme at any point without financial penalty – and, in fact, we would expect them to do so if, for example, a free school is approved in the current [central government funded] application wave that removes the need for an additional whole school."

### Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 The application of pupil place planning arrangements contributes to the Council Business Plan in ensuring an effective allocation process for school admissions. The council has a statutory duty to offer a school place to every child living in the borough and must manage the schools estate to meet the predicted need.
- 6.2 For any new school needed the Council does not have under its direct control the legal mechanisms to create new schools and must, under the Academies Act 2010 and Education Act 2011, seek Department for Education approved academy trust providers to provide the schools. Guidance from the DfE, for - delivery of a school, using the Presumption will be followed when appropriate.
- 6.3 The financial risks are covered in the Costs and Budget Summary section above.

### Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation on opening of new schools through the Free School Presumption route as detailed above.
- 7.2 Any plans requiring Prescribed Alterations to schools will follow the statutory process including consultation.

Background Papers	
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8 <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844346/Free_school_presumption_051119.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844346/Free_school_presumption_051119.pdf</a>	
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