

Report to Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting	25 th November 2021
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education
Report Author	Fay Davies
Public/Private Document	Public

Secondary School Places 2022 - 2025

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The new Edgar Wood Academy has opened for 2021 year 7 intake in Middleton. The second new mainstream Secondary school for Rochdale borough, which will be run by the Star Academies trust, is expected to open in 2023 in Littleborough although timelines will not be set until planning permission is approved. The new Secondary SEN school, which will be run by the New Bridge Trust, is now scheduled to be open in 2023.
- 1.2 This report covers details of the new school and capacity of school places in the secondary school sector.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the delivery timescales and spaces in the three new schools; The Edgar Wood Academy in Middleton, the Littleborough Star Leadership Academy and the Heywood SEN school.
- 2.2 To note that current pupil forecasts, and timelines on the new schools, indicate the council's ability to meet its statutory duty. This is dependent on current timelines indicated by the Department for Education's Capital and Free School teams working on the new schools.
- 2.3 To note on-going inflow of pupils, that has increased since the start of the easing of the pandemic lockdown, are causing significant challenges to Secondary schools that are at or close to capacity.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The council has a statutory duty to offer every pupil living in the borough, who applies, a Secondary school place. Where the council offers a school place that is over the statutory “safe walking distance” for the age of that child the council is required to provide free school transport. Because bus transport in the area is provided through Transport for Greater Manchester, any child offered a school place, which is over the statutory distance criteria, is offered a free bus pass that is provided from council funds. The council receives no central government funding for school bus transport.
- 3.2 The council does receive Basic Need funding to provide additional school places for both permanent and temporary school building expansions and bulge classes. The allocation of Basic Need funding from central government is reported annually to the council Cabinet and the report this year was approved on 31st March 2021.

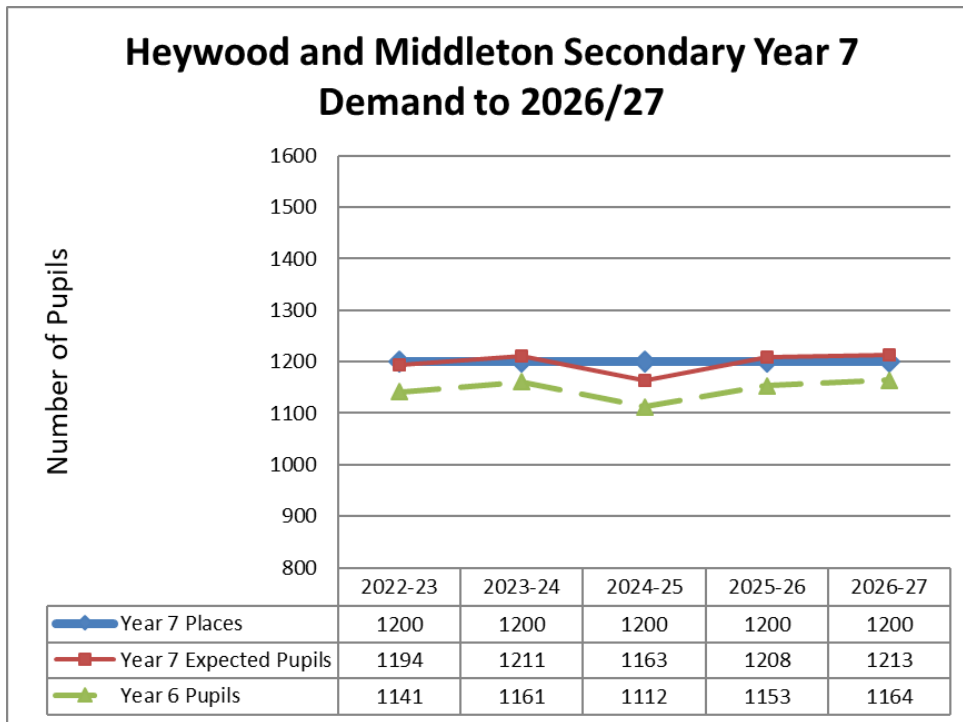
<h3>Key Points for Consideration</h3>

- 4.1 Contingency plans for Secondary school intake were last reported to Cabinet on 29th September 2020. For 2019 and 2020 intakes additional needed capacity was delivered by existing schools taking bulge classes, which were funded through Basic Need where capital works were required.
- 4.2 For 2021 intake the severe Secondary school place shortage was local to the Middleton area and some surplus was forecast for Rochdale central schools. The difficulty in travelling times from Middleton to Rochdale centre meant that offering surplus places in Rochdale centre to families in Middleton was not deemed a viable option. Consequently council officers worked closely with the Altus Trust and the Department for Education to produce plans and contingencies to deliver the needed places in a temporary location. Additional bulge places were also offered at four existing schools.
- 4.3 In September 2021 the Edgar Wood Academy opened with 4 forms of entry, 120 pupil, capacity at a temporary site at Hopwood Hall College Campus in Middleton. The Permanent site is due to open at a site close to Bowlee on Heywood Old Road, Middleton, for September 2022.
- 4.4 In September 2021 Wardle Academy also had a major building extension to provide 100 additional places; 50 for 2021 and 50 for 2022 intakes.

Heywood and Middleton

- 4.5 Because of the usual travel of pupils between Heywood and Middleton these areas are considered together. Available places and forecasts for pupils numbers are shown in figure 1 showing the expectation currently that schools in the Heywood and Middleton area will be at capacity despite the opening of the Edgar Wood Academy.

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4.7 *Figure 1: Forecast for Places and expected pupils in the combined Heywood and Middleton area*

Admission numbers for the next intake year are shown in the table below.

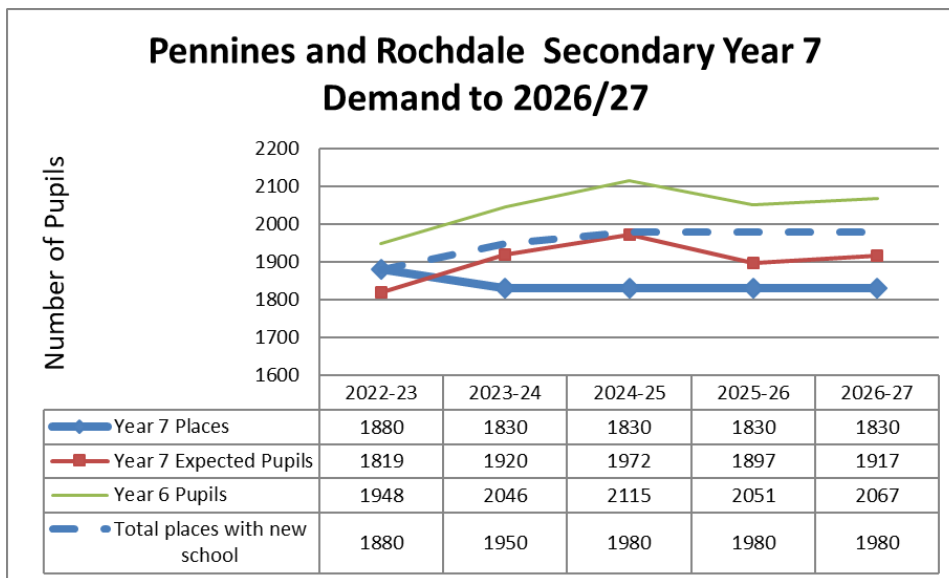
School	Pupil Admission Number for 2022
Newhouse Academy	210
Holy Family RC & CE College	150
Middleton Technology School	270
Cardinal Langley RC High School	210
St. Anne's Academy	180
Edgar Wood Academy	180
Total	1200

Table 1 Places at Heywood and Middleton schools for 2022

4.8 Pennine and Rochdale

There has been a shortage of places in the popular Pennine Secondary schools for some time. It is expected that additional capacity created at Wardle Academy for 2021 and 2022 intakes will be filled. In the combined Pennine and Rochdale areas there is, on average, a 9% drop in pupils attending Rochdale LA maintained schools between year 6 and year 7. This is predominantly pupils choosing to travel to private, independent, grammar schools, or schools in other local authority areas. This drop in pupils does change year to year between 8% and 11% and therefore out of borough factors can cause inaccuracy in the forecast.

4.9



4.10 *Figure 2: Secondary Intake forecast for Pennine and Rochdale*

The forecast shows insufficient places available in existing schools if the new Littleborough Star Academy does not open for 2023, but the new school, on current forecasts, should be able to accommodate the forecasted number of pupils from 2023/24 to 2026/27.

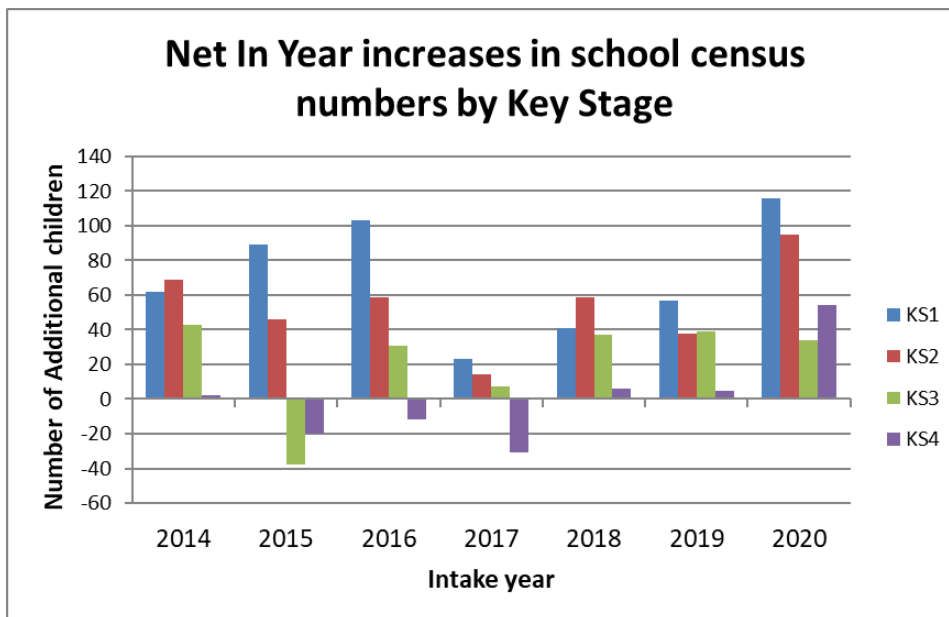
School	Pupil Admission Number for 2022
Hollingworth Academy	270
Wardle Academy	290
St.Cuthbert's RC High	240
Kingsway Park High	270
Matthew Moss High	240
Oulder Hill School	300
Falinge Park High School	270
Total	1880

Table 2: Places at Pennine and Rochdale schools for 2022

4.12 Other considerations

In-year applications for places either after the start of year 7 or in higher year groups have been rising for some years in both the Primary sector and Secondary Sector.

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4.14

In total in the 2020/21 academic year almost 300 additional pupils were placed in Rochdale schools after the start to term. This does cause significant difficulties, as those additional pupils mostly arrive into the same few schools that carry spaces at the start of term.

4.15

Many of our Secondary schools are now at capacity in some or all year groups. Last year Secondary schools, accepted on-roll after the October school census, an additional 88 secondary pupils (net). While this is something the borough has seen before at Primary level, it has never happened previously at Secondary. This includes 26 pupils arriving after the start of their final year of school (year 11).

4.16

As detailed above Rochdale sees a net loss of children at Secondary transition and this has varied year to year depending on factors outside the borough. In 2019 the popular Oldham Crompton House school completed a major extension and increased its intake by 50%. Next year (2022) a new school will open in Oldham offering additional places.

4.17 Heywood SEN School

On the 29th October 2019 Cabinet approved the release of the site at Heywood Sports Village for use for the new SEN school being delivered by the Department for Education.

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The New Bridge Trust, who run special and autism specialist schools in Oldham were awarded the contract to run the new school and Rochdale RANs service are now working with the trust to integrate the New Bridge offer into the suit of services provided within Rochdale.

4.19

Timescales on the delivery of the new SEN school currently indicate planning permission will be sought before the end of 2021, with the new school opening for September 2023.

4.20

The New Bridge Trust have indicated that once the school opens a school naming competition will be run and the young people attending the school will be asked to choose the new school name.

4.21 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.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 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.

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 Provision of sufficient Secondary school places, within the new school buildings that are being delivered through the centrally managed Free school programme, are not under control of the local authority, but because the statutory duty to provide places resides with the local authority then consequently the local authority needs to be ready to work with local partners to meet the needs of its residents if required.
- 6.3 The financial risks are covered in the Costs and Budget Summary section above.

Consultation

7.1 In order to open the new Littleborough school the Star Academies trust need to run a statutory consultation to seek stakeholder views.

7.2 Any additional places created through building works are required to go through the statutory planning consultation process.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
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