

Report to Rochdale South Township



Date of Meeting	6 th December 2022
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education
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Public/Private Document	Public

Need for Primary School Places 2023 - 2026

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Across the borough birth rates for Primary school cohort intakes have dropped by 204; from 3051 in 2021, to 2847 for 2022 intake. Also through 2015 to 2019 there had been an in-flow of pupils in pre-school years which significantly enlarged those cohorts. In the last couple of years in-flow has been reduced, particularly central Rochdale, by Covid and lockdowns, and underlying birth rates are due to drop by a further 121 by the 2025 Primary school intake.
- 1.2 It is still uncertain whether in-flow rates will return to previous levels and some areas of the schools system must look to reduce admission numbers in order for schools to have certainty on pupil numbers and thus finance.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Approve an additional Reception class at Hollin Primary School in Middleton for 2023 school intake.
- 2.2 Note the additional Primary school year 2 class at Alkington Primary school in Middleton.
- 2.3 Approve opening three consultations on removing excess Primary school spare capacity in Rochdale central, Rochdale north, and Heywood.
- 2.4 Note the consultation on new Presumption Free schools currently open on the consultation hub
- 2.5 Note the opening of the DfE Wave 15 Free school application process.

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 Drops in birth rates and take up of places for Reception intake mean that too much capacity is forecasted. This will impact on financial viability of schools and have knock on effects for quality of education. All school Admission Authorities, including the Local Authority, are required to follow the Admissions code to reduce the Published Admission Number for their school/schools (see attached background paper in section 8)

<h3>Key Points for Consideration</h3>

- 4.1 In order to improve council oversight, and better manage the process of adapting pupil spaces to need, in September 2021 the ADCS created a decision making committee for pupil places with representatives from finance, school improvement and school organisation teams.
- 4.2 Heywood
Primary school intakes in Heywood have dropped since 2019 by about 40 pupils. For the 2023 year the indications are that, if it follows birth rates, the intake should rise by about 30 pupils before dropping again for 2024 onwards.
- 4.3 Until 2019 Heywood had a net increase in children starting school, of up to 10% above birth rates. Since then the increase has stopped. Behind the lack of recent inflow into the area is the fact that the new housing completions which were approximately 200 per year between 2017 and 2019, have now dropped to only 30 per year since 2020. This year 340 new homes have been given planning permission as part of the South Heywood/Junction 19 development. An estimate of 100 new homes per year for the next 5 years is included in the forecasts. The building and sale rate of the new homes could be impacted by wider market conditions.
- 4.4 Although the South Heywood/Junction 19 development does include a site for a new Primary school, and a Presumption competition will be initiated, it is not obvious at this time whether a new school will be needed. The delivery time for a new school including consultation and Presumption competition could be approximately 4-5 years and so is beyond the current forecasting period).

4.5 Too much spare capacity is currently available in the forecasted time line and approval is sought to consult local schools on the reduction of pupil intake numbers by 1 form of entry, 30 pupils, moving forward.

4.6

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Reception Places Needed	39 spare	97 spare	87 spare	85 spare
Plans		Consideration must be taken on how much spare capacity is too much. Schools in the area will be consulted on reducing intake.		
Future Issues			New housing coming forward in South Heywood <u>may</u> require a new 1 form entry school. The new school would be paid for by developers and a site has been provided.	

4.7 Middleton

Forecasts show that in Middleton additional places are needed for 2023/24. Middleton has high levels of in-flow and significant shortages of places are expected without additional capacity. During the 2021/22 academic year 44 additional pupils arrived on-roll in key stage 1 classes and 76 additional children arrived in key stage 2 after the start of the school year just in Middleton.

4.8

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Reception Places Needed	61 places needed	23 places needed	13 places needed	19 places needed
Plans	Provide a third year of temporary bulge classes at Hollin Primary			
Future Issues	Permanent expansion of school is needed in central Middleton which is under negotiation.			

4.9

For 2023 Reception intake an additional 30 places are being created in Hollin Primary with the approval of the head teacher and governing board.

4.10

An addition of an extra year 2 class is also in negotiation with Alkington Primary to open after the October half term.

4.11

While inflow of additional pupils after start of Reception class has been a long term feature in Middleton, and one extra class has always been needed by the end of year 2, the in-flow of pupils at key stage 2 last year was extraordinary. Almost ten times as many pupils as the long term average inflow was seen, which was presumably families moving into the new homes and moving prior to the Secondary school transition. Almost all year groups in Middleton will have insufficient places going forward if the in-flow seen last year continues.

4.12

An expansion project is under negotiation, to provide accommodation for a 3 classroom extension, with a school in Middleton but a final solution is not yet agreed.

4.13 Pennine

For the 2021 Reception intake for north Pennine the underlying birth rate was high, but schools under-recruited considerably. 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. Although there are high numbers of spare places it is considered that once local issues are resolved that uptake of places will recover.

4.14

In Pennines South there is a net loss between births and Reception class. Some spare capacity is needed and there are plans in the Places for Everyone plan for additional new housing.

4.15

		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Pennines N	Extra Reception Places Needed	44 spare	67 spare	77 spare	58 spare
	Plans	Spare capacity will be kept under review, but temporary issues are thought to be impacting current applications.			
	Future Issues	Littleborough Primary new build school and the new Secondary school, will impact on the desirability of places in this area. New housing is also coming forward.			
Pennines S	Extra Reception Places Needed	26 spare	17 spare	29 spare	23 spare
	Plans/ Future issues	Plans will remain under review with consideration of the Places for Everyone plan.			

4.16 Rochdale

Across the Rochdale north area (NE and NW) there are on at least 3 spare forms of entry (90 places) over the forecast period. The over-capacity needs to be addressed.

4.17

		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
NW and NE Rochdale	Extra Reception Places Needed	58 spare (NE) 34 spare (NW)	28 spare (NE) 60 spare (NW)	73 spare (NE) 39 spare (NW)	34 spare (NE) 59 spare (NW)
	Plans/ Future Issues	NE area: 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			
		Across the area capacity should be reduced.			

4.18

In central Rochdale, 2023 is due to be a high intake years according to the underlying birth rates, but school applications in central Rochdale appear to me more correlated with economic issues and not birth rates. From 2024 however, birth rates and the forecast show too much spare capacity and some of this spare capacity should be removed.

4.19

In the south of Rochdale, underlying birth rates show a dip for the 2022 school intake before rising gradually towards 2025. Housing developments in the

south of the area, have in the past, 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.

4.20

C and SW Rochdale		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Extra Reception Places Needed	42 spare (C) 24 spare (SW)	75 spare (C) 22 spare (SW)	85 spare (C) -11 needed (SW)	69 spare (C) 13 spare (SW)
	Plans	Spare capacity in the central Rochdale should be reduced.			
	Future Issues	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.			

4.21 Summary

- I. New consultation on Presumption route new Primary schools for Heywood and Rochdale SW is open.
- II. Extra capacity is needed in Middleton. The additional Reception class at Hollin Primary will be continued for 2023. A year 2 class has been created in Alkington Primary.
- III. Investigate options for removing 3 classes of spare capacity in central Rochdale, North Rochdale and Heywood.

4.22 Wave 15

The government has opened a new round of centrally delivered Free (Academy) schools. A short note was sent out to interested trusts regarding the need for a new school in Castleton. Delivery timescales on centrally delivered schools are between 4 and 7 years. The note was an update to the Wave 14 note that was sent out in 2019/20. The Expression of Interest deadline was September 16th.

4.23 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

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6. 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.

Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation on opening of new schools through the Free School Presumption route currently open on the consultation hub.
- 7.2 Any plans requiring reductions in Pupil Admission Numbers will follow the statutory process including consultation

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
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8	School admissions code 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
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