

Meeting date: 17 January 2024

Report to: Children's Services, Education & Skills Scrutiny Board

Report title: Mainstream School Demography

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Wards affected:

☒ All Wards

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Board on the impact of demography and housing development in Solihull on the supply and demand for mainstream school places.
- 1.2 Local authorities have a duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient school places are available for pupils living in their area.
- 1.3 The demography in Solihull is changing for a range of reasons including: -
 - A falling birth rate,
 - In-year migration
 - Strategic housing development
- 1.4 Primary School forecasts show that over the next 5 years the number of empty places in our primary schools rise with the potential for 9% surplus places by 2027/28.
- 1.5 In-year migration is putting pressure on places in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6). As this migration moves through to secondary schools, the increase in pupil numbers is putting pressure on secondary school admissions to Year 7 and is forecast to continue to do so

until secondary school numbers peak in September 2027.

- 1.6 For the academic year 2023/24 additional places have been created across all 7 years of KS2 and KS3, with 3 additional year 7 classes created to meet the rapid increase in demand at secondary intake. Places are kept under constant review with new places created where required as pockets of demand emerge.

2. Decision(s) Recommended

- 2.1 To note the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure that the Council continues to meet its duty to ensure that there are sufficient mainstream school places.

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3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Local authorities have a duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient school places are available for pupils living in their area.

Primary Schools

- 3.2 Solihull is currently experiencing a drop in the birth rate which has fallen by 11% in the last 5 years and this is already being felt by primary schools. At October 2022 pupil census, there were 230 empty reception places (8%), equivalent to over 7 forms of entry and in Year 1 there were 184 empty places (6%). Assuming demand for school places from children living outside of the Solihull continues at current levels, forecasts show that by September 2025 we will be operating with up to 17 forms of entry or over 500 empty reception places.
- 3.3 The Department for Education (DfE) considers that Council's should operate with between 2% and 5% surplus school places to allow for families moving into the Borough and to meet parental preference. Officers assess school capacity against demand annually and at Oct 2022 pupil census, primary schools were operating with 3% surplus places.
- 3.4 For school place planning purposes, the Borough is split into 9 primary school planning areas and 3 secondary school planning areas. Planning areas are designed to reflect travel and parental preference patterns for schools and where possible, the availability of places within a planning area is taken into account, rather than those across the whole Borough when determining our sufficiency of places. Data on the places available for each primary planning area is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.5 Appendix A shows that at October 2022 pupil census, although there was a 3% surplus of places in our primary schools overall, this is masking an uneven split in empty places. For Key Stage 1 (reception to Year 2) the operating capacity is nearly 6% for the Borough but for Key Stage 2 (years 3 to 6) the operating capacity is just below 2%. This reflects the pattern of in-year migration that we have been experiencing over the last 2-3 years.
- 3.6 Primary School forecasts show an ongoing fall in primary school rolls year on year with a potential overall surplus in places of 9% by 2027/28.
- 3.7 The DfE publish the forecast accuracy of pupil projections for each Local Authority for forecasts made one year and two years previously. For 2022/23 Solihull's forecasting accuracy for primary schools was +0.3% for 1 year ahead (within a range of -2.9% to +2.9% for other LAs) and -1.2% for 2 years ahead (within a range of -3.9% to +6.7% for other LAs).

Secondary Schools

- 3.8 Nationally, September 2023 was the peak at Year 7 intake (secondary school admissions), as the larger number of pupils leaving primary schools now transfers to the secondary phase. However, although the September 2023 intake to secondary

schools in Solihull was the largest yet, the peak is expected to be in September 2027. This is due to the high level of inward migration being experienced in Key Stage 2 in primary schools.

- 3.9 Data on the places available for each secondary planning area is attached at Appendix B, which shows that Solihull is operating below the DfE preferred level of surplus places and with little or no capacity in every year group. This is making school places difficult to secure for families moving into the Borough. However, the picture between North Solihull and South Solihull is quite different.
- 3.10 Secondary school forecasts show that there will be ongoing pressure on secondary school places until numbers peak in September 2027 during which time there will be little or no spare capacity, after which numbers are forecast to fall as lower numbers in primary schools feed through to the secondary phase.
- 3.11 For 2022/23 Solihull's forecasting accuracy for secondary schools was +0.5% for 1 year ahead (within a range of -2.2% to +5.2% for other LAs) and -0.8% for 2 years ahead (within a range of -2.6% to +5.8% for other LAs).

In year admissions

- 3.12 Over the last 2-3 years Solihull has seen a significant increase in net migration into the Borough. This migration has put pressure on some year groups in certain areas of the Borough. There has been particular pressure in Key Stage 2 (years 3 to 6) and Key Stage 3 (years 7 to 9) in the central Solihull and Shirley areas. This inward migration has been managed through current vacancies in schools and where necessary the creation of bulge classes.
- 3.13 Between October 2021 and October 2022 pupil census the net migration in primary schools was +250 pupils and at secondary schools it was -5 pupils. However, for secondary schools this does not reflect the growth in particular areas of the Borough. For example, in the Central and West area Year 7 to Year 8 saw net growth of +64 pupils. It is the speed and the concentration of the migration on a small geographical area in the Borough that has caused the real pressure on school places.
- 3.14 It is important to note that places cannot be 'held' for pupils that may move into the Borough. 12% (circa 2,500) pupils in our primary schools and 32% (circa 5,700) pupils in our secondary schools live outside of Solihull. Therefore, Solihull operates with far more school places than it requires for Solihull resident pupils.
- 3.15 For this academic year 2023/24 we have created additional places across all 7 years of KS2 and KS3, with 3 additional year 7 classes created to meet the rapid increase in demand at secondary intake. Places are kept under constant review with new places created where required as pockets of demand emerge.
- 3.16 The support of our schools has been essential in order for the Council to meet its sufficiency duty at a time when our inward migration has been significant.

Solihull Draft Local Plan

- 3.17 The impact of housing development on school places and education infrastructure has been considered as part of the drafting of the Solihull Local Plan. Where the scale of

new housing sites requires it, new primary schools and secondary school expansions are being planned.

- 3.18 In light of new DfE guidance on securing developer contributions, published in August 2023, the Section 106 methodology for education infrastructure has been reviewed and will be considered by Cabinet Member for Children and Education on 22nd January 2024.
- 3.19 The revised policy includes details of how pupil yield for housing developments will be calculated and the cost per place that will be used to evaluate the contribution required to support education infrastructure. The revised policy now includes support for school transport where this is appropriate.
- 3.20 On average a housing development of 100 houses, assuming 40% affordable housing will generate the following number of pupils by each phase.

Tenure	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Post 16	SEND
Affordable	4.24	18.36	11.84	3.6	2.48
Market	4.2	15.96	6.06	2.22	0.36
Total	8.44	34.32	17.9	5.82	2.84
Pupil Yield	8	34	18	6	3

- 3.21 This example assumes that all dwellings have 2+ bedrooms whereas in reality, planning applications are coming forward with 20/25% 1 bedroom dwellings which will not produce a pupil yield. The example shows 34 primary age pupils are expected to be produced from 100 dwellings, this is a total for all 7 primary year groups, so on average, 100 dwelling could generate around 5 pupils per year group. This also assumes that all families moving into the development are new to the area.
- 3.22 As and when planning applications are received each site will be considered against the S106 methodology to determine whether a S106 contribution is required and how additional places will be delivered either through expansion or a new school. Consideration will also need to be given to the demographic picture for the planning area and ensure that supply and demand for school places is balanced and does not cause a detrimental impact on existing schools.
- 3.23 The table below includes the identified sites and estimated dwelling numbers published in the draft Local Plan. As sites come forward and dwelling numbers are confirmed then the demand for school places is reassessed to ensure that sufficient school places have been planned for.

Locality	Est Dwellings	School Place Requirement
Rural East: Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden & Meriden	1,900	Proposed new primary school (420 places) & 150 place secondary school expansion
Rural South: Blythe and Hockley Heath	1,700	Proposed new primary school (420 places) & expansion of secondary places if required.
Central Solihull	800	Can be met within existing school provision
Knowle	780	Proposed new primary school planned to be delivered as 210 places initially.

UK Central	3,000 within the plan period but further dwellings planned beyond the plan period	2 x new primary schools (420 places each) planned and either new secondary school or additional places in existing schools dependent on dwelling mix. School places planned beyond the draft Local Plan period. Both primary schools to have infrastructure to expand to 630 places if the developments require it
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4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The supply and demand of school places is reviewed annually to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory duty. Where the evidence suggests that either an increase in places is required or a rationalisation of places is necessary then a more detailed review of a planning areas is undertaken to assess how and when school organisational changes are made.
- 4.2 In light of the recent demographic changes in the Borough, the School Organisation Plan which sets out in detail, the demography in Solihull and its implications for mainstream school places, is currently under review. The revised Plan will be considered by Cabinet Member before being used as the basis to work with schools across planning areas, to manage the supply and demand of school places.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The key issues identified in the revised School Organisation Plan will be developed based upon the latest data analysis.
- 5.2 Individual proposals that arise will be subject to feasibility investigation to develop the most appropriate and cost effective option for school reorganisation. Individual proposals will be subject to statutory proposals and subject to consultation with all interested parties before a final decision is made.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it. 	<p>The provision of sufficient and suitable school places can contribute significantly to the performance of individual pupils and schools. Enabling families to access local school places will also reduce the travel time for children.</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 4. Enable communities to thrive.	
Economy: 5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres. 6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.	<p>The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for families living in or moving to Solihull.</p> <p>The development of new schools as part of strategic new housing sites will seek to meet the changing demography and demand from current and future families and support economic growth.</p>
Environment: 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.	Ensuring that the supply of school places in each planning area is linked to demand means that more pupils will have their educational needs met closer to home and within their local community.
9. Promote employee wellbeing	Enter text.

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.2.1 All proposals to expand, create or rationalise school places are subject to statutory proposals which include consultation processes before a decision is taken on whether to proceed with the development.

6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.4 Where school expansions or new schools are required there will be capital and revenue implications. The DfE allocates basic need capital to the Council to enable additional mainstream school places to be added but expects Councils to seek S106 monies from housing developments to support necessary educational infrastructure.
- 6.5 School Forum has approved growth criteria to identify additional revenue funding for those schools experiencing growth in pupil numbers. The revenue cost of the additional pupils is funded entirely from increases in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There has been real pressure on the growth fund from the growing need to provide additional places due to in-year migration.
- 6.6 Basic Need and S106 funding streams are incorporated into the Children's Services

Capital Programme.

6.7 Legal implications:

6.7.1 The Local Authority has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of Solihull resident children.

6.7.2 Any proposals seeking changes to school organisation are subject to statutory processes.

6.8 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.8.1 The two key risks are that the additional school places cannot be added in time to meet the growth in demand for Solihull children, in particular with localised inward net migration and that the proposed costs of individual proposals exceed the resources available.

6.8.2 With a falling birth rate in Solihull it is also essential that the supply of additional places through the delivery of new schools is planned carefully to ensure that new provision does not impact on existing school viability.

6.9 Equality implications:

6.10 These strategies actively seek to reduce inequality and improve outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A – Operational Capacity Primary Schools

7.2 Appendix B – Operational Capacity Secondary Schools

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 None

9. List of Other Relevant Documents

9.1 None