

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT ON THE 2019-2023 OXFORDSHIRE PUPIL PLACE PLAN

Report by Director for Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to note the attached report and agree any comments it may wish to ensure Cabinet considers when asked to adopt the Oxfordshire 2019-2023 Pupil Place Plan at its meeting on 21st January 2020.

Executive Summary

1. This report seeks any comments for Cabinet to be aware of when asked to adopt the revised Oxfordshire Pupil Place Plan, covering the period 2019/20 - 2023/24.
2. The Pupil Place Plan includes present and predicted future pupil numbers on roll, together with information about birth rates, school capacity, and new housing. The Plan sets out proposed changes in the number of school places available over the next year and it suggests where other changes may be necessary in the future. The Plan also collates our policies on school organisation and the statutory framework for making changes such as opening, closing or enlarging schools.
3. The Pupil Place Plan does not itself propose service changes, but rather collates proposals which have been made, or are expected. It is referred to by those interested in school sufficiency and planning issues, including housing developers, district and parish councils, academy sponsors and the schools themselves, and as such can generate some press interest.

Introduction

4. The Pupil Place Plan is revised annually, based on revised data and comments from schools and other stakeholders received across the year.
5. The updated data sections of the Plan were circulated to Headteachers for their comments from mid-September to mid-October, and to local members through the Locality Meetings being held in October. The full plan was considered by the School Organisation and Stakeholders Group at its meeting on 21 October.
6. As a result of the consultation process, minor corrections and clarifications were made to the draft Plan.

2019 Allocations Summary

7. Growth in the number of primary pupils on roll at Oxfordshire's mainstream schools continued to slow, and Reception numbers fell by 1.6%, the third year in a row of falling numbers. Nearly all families are allocated a preferred primary school, and 93% were allocated their first-choice school in 2019, compared to a national average of 91%.
8. Secondary pupil numbers are continuing their strong growth, as the increased birth rate feeds through into the secondary age range. The 2019 transfer cohort is particularly large, resulting in a 5% increase in demand for Year 7 places for 2019. This was particularly challenging given the late confirmation that the Swan School could open in Oxford, and the delayed opening of Whitelands Academy in Bicester. Despite the increase in pupil numbers, 88% of applicants were allocated their first preference, well above the national average (81%).

Primary Education Sufficiency Planning: Countywide

9. Current data indicate that the number of births in Oxfordshire peaked in 2010 and 2011, which corresponds broadly to the very high demand for Reception places for 2015. Demand for Reception places has been falling in most areas since then, but is now forecast to start rising again in areas experiencing significant housing growth. The latest pupil projections (submitted to the DfE this summer) show a 5.8% increase in primary pupil numbers between 2018/19 and 2023/24.
10. Planning for primary school sufficiency is now more focused on housing growth, rather than the birth-rate led pressure over the previous decade, and as a result growth in demand for school places will not be evenly spread between schools. In many areas the increases in capacity provided in recent years will be sufficient to meet the demand of the period covered by the Pupil Place Plan, but there will be some further expansions of schools in areas of housing growth. There will also be more new schools opened within significant housing developments.

Secondary Education Sufficiency Planning: Countywide

11. Secondary pupil numbers are now growing strongly, at a rate of about 2% per year, as the higher numbers in primary schools are now feeding through to secondary schools. The latest pupil projections show a 19.7% predicted rise between 2018/19 and 2023/24.
12. We are working closely with our secondary schools to ensure sufficient capacity as the population growth moves through into secondary school. As this growth follows a period of falling numbers, in some cases secondary

schools have sufficient capacity to meet the population growth expected over the period covered by the Pupil Place Plan. Where schools are expected to need to expand, options for doing so are being explored. There will also be several new schools required, usually related to areas of significant housing growth.

13. This school capacity expansion programme includes:
- Four new secondary schools which have opened in Oxfordshire in the last 5 years – Europa School (Culham), Heyford Park Free School, Aureus School (Didcot) and the Swan School (Oxford), as well as the two studio schools and one University Technical College which directly add places for 14-19 year-olds and indirectly reduce pressure on places for younger secondary pupils at existing schools.
 - Two new schools currently in the pre-opening phase: Whitelands Academy, planned to open in SW Bicester in 2020, and an all-through free school at Grove Airfield, planned to open in 2023.
 - Sites for further new secondary schools have also been identified as part of the NE Didcot and NW Bicester developments (secured with s106), and we are working closely with district council colleagues to ensure suitable school sites can also be secured for their Local Plan proposals, including for a new secondary school in Banbury.
 - 11 schools have already expanded or increased their admission number, or are in the process of expanding, to meet this population growth – Banbury School, Bartholomew School (Eynsham), Burford School, Cheney School, Didcot Girls School, Faringdon Community College, King Alfred's Academy, Matthew Arnold School (Cumnor), Oxford Spires Academy, The Warriner School (Bloxham) and Wallingford School.
 - Projects have also started to explore the potential of several other schools to expand.

Special Education Provision Sufficiency Planning: Countywide

14. A new SEND Sufficiency Strategy was approved by the December 2018 Cabinet. Work is now underway to implement the strategy, including securing the opening of new special schools in Bloxham and Didcot; rebuilding and expanding Northfield School in Oxford; expanding John Watson School and Bardwell School; and extending the county's network of special needs resource bases.

Financial and Staff Implications

15. Areas of population growth within Oxfordshire will require ongoing investment in new and/or expanded schools; this is already reflected in the Council's capital plan.
16. The data contained in the report is used to support the Council in seeking resources to provide any changes in provision of education property infrastructure. This will include any forms of capital funding allocated to local

authorities by Central Government and negotiations with third parties to meet the needs of housing growth.

Equalities Implications

17. The provision of sufficient and suitable school places has a positive impact on equalities through promoting social inclusion and minimising barriers to accessing education.

Lucy Butler
Director for Children's Services

Annexes: Annex 1: Oxfordshire County Council Pupil Place Plan 2019-2023

Contact Officer: Barbara Chillman, Pupil Place Planning Manager, 07554 103418

November 2019