

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 NOVEMBER 2018

PUPIL PLACE PLANNING 2018-2022

Report by Deputy Director for Education

Introduction

1. An updated Oxfordshire Pupil Place Plan, covering the period 2018/19 – 2022/23, was approved by the Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services on 14 November.
2. The 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 sets out our policies on school organisation and the statutory framework for making changes such as opening, closing or enlarging schools. The Pupil Place Plan does not itself propose service changes, but collates proposals which have been made, or are expected.
3. The Pupil Place Plan is updated annually, based on revised data and comments from schools.

Summary

4. Demand for school places in Oxfordshire continues to rise, with the higher birth rate of the last decade now starting to affect secondary schools. In addition, the significant housing growth planned across Oxfordshire will further increase the pupil population. Although much work has already been done to increase primary school capacity, further increases in capacity will be needed, and expansion of secondary school capacity has now also commenced. The Pupil Place Plan sets out changes planned over the next five years, and includes the current programme of proposed new schools, many of which will open beyond the time period covered by this Plan.
5. This report focusses specifically on secondary education, as growth in primary schools is stabilising. Special education provision has been the subject of a separate report.

Primary education sufficiency planning

6. Nearly all families are allocated a preferred primary school, and 93% were allocated their first-choice school in 2018.
7. 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 is expected to fall in most areas over the next few years, before again rising as a result of planned housing growth. Total primary pupil numbers will, however, continue to grow, as the older, smaller, cohorts leave primary school. The latest draft pupil projections (submitted to the DfE this summer, but not yet formally approved) show a 5.7% increase in primary pupil numbers between 2017/18 and 2022/23.

8. Planning for primary school sufficiency is now more focused on housing growth, rather than the birth-rate led pressure over the previous decade. 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

9. Secondary pupil numbers are now also 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 draft pupil projections (submitted to the DfE this summer, but not yet formally approved) show a 19.3% predicted rise in secondary school pupils between 2017/18 and 2022/23.
10. Despite the increase in pupil numbers, the percentage of families being allocated their first preference secondary school increased in 2018 to 88.8% (up from 88.6% in 2017); just 3.17% of applicants were offered a place at a school not among their stated preferences.
11. 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.
12. This school capacity expansion programme includes:
 - Three new secondary schools which have opened in Oxfordshire in the last 5 years – Europa School (Culham), Heyford Park Free School and Aureus School (Didcot), 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.
 - Three new schools currently in the pre-opening phase: The Swan School, planned to open in Oxford in 2019 (see below); Whitelands Academy, planned to open in SW Bicester in 2020 (see below); and an all-through free school at Grove Airfield, planned to open in 2022.

- Sites for further new secondary schools have also been identified as part of the NE Didcot and SW 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 emerging Local Plan proposals.
 - 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.
13. There is a specific peak in the population due to transfer from primary to secondary school in 2019. While most of this will be met by the expansions noted above, in some areas “bulge” classes may be required, and discussions are underway with the relevant schools. There are specific issues known to affect Bicester and Oxford.
14. The new Whitelands Academy in SW Bicester, which had been planned to open in 2019, has now been delayed to 2020. This would have left a shortage of places for 2019, but additional places have been agreed at existing schools. We will not be able to confirm the number of additional places required until the applications have been processed.
15. The Swan School is due to open in temporary accommodation in 2019, - subject to the Secretary of State signing a funding agreement with the River Learning Trust. This funding agreement will not be signed in time to offer places on National Offer Day, and therefore all pupils offered a place at the Swan School will also need to be offered a place at an existing school, to protect them against any potential delay in the Swan School opening. This will require existing schools to agree “bulge” classes to enable all applicants to be offered a place, but those bulge classes may not then be required if the Swan School does open as planned. This will clearly be a stressful time for all involved.

Special education provision sufficiency planning

16. Special education provision has been the subject of a separate report to the committee. A full report on [SEND Sufficiency Strategy](#) is due to be considered by the December Cabinet.

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