

APPENDIX

3





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Land west of Ninfield Lane, Bexhill  
Rother District Council Regulation 18 Local Plan  
Representations regarding Primary education  
on behalf of Catesby Estates Limited and Rurban Estates  
Limited

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Report Purpose & Scope

1.1.1. I have been asked to consider the development for its likely impact on social infrastructure in the local area.

1.1.2. The purpose of this report is to inform the Council in preparing its Local Plan and identifying the most appropriate location for a primary school to inform the suggested growth in North Bexhill.

1.1.3. It is acknowledged that if the impacts of the development legitimately call for a S106 contribution due to capacity problems, which meet the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations, then it is accepted that a contribution should be offered either in financial terms or in-kind contributions, such as land.

## 1.2. Intended Audience

1.2.1. The intended audience is the client and relevant local authorities, and this report will accompany representations to Rother District Council (RDC) on its Regulation 18 Consultation on RDC Local Plan submitted on behalf of Catesby Estates Limited and Rurban Estates.

## 1.3. Research Sources

1.3.1. The contents of this initial report are based on publicly available information, including relevant data from central government and the local authority and on information obtained through requests under the Freedom of Information Act. Research for this report was conducted in February 2026.

## 2. Regulatory Framework

### 2.1. Local Planning Framework

2.1.1. When preparing a Local Plan, a Council, in its role as the Local Planning Authority, is required to plan positively to ensure that development and infrastructure needs are met. This is to ensure that new development is delivered sustainably in a planned way and that housing and employment growth is balanced alongside vital infrastructure.

2.1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 (NPPF) highlights the importance of the provision of infrastructure to achieve sustainable development as the overarching objective of the planning system and plan making (paragraph 8). Furthermore, paragraphs 15 and 16 refer to the importance of the planning system being genuinely plan led, and that plans should:

*"be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees..."*.

2.1.3. Paragraph 20 refers to how:

*"strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale, and design quality of places (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), and make sufficient provision for:*

- *housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*
- *infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- *community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and*
- *conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation."*

2.1.4. Paragraphs 25 and 26 reiterate the importance of effective collaboration with relevant bodies to identify strategic matters, including with infrastructure providers, and that such joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary to ensure a:

*"positively prepared and justified strategy"*.

2.1.5. In terms of the delivery of infrastructure, paragraph 34 considers that Local Plans should set out the contributions expected from development, including infrastructure such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, and green and digital infrastructure. However, it is important to note that such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the Plan.

2.1.6. Additionally, the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) supports this position and emphasises the need to ensure that the Local Plan is capable of being delivered, including with the provision of infrastructure. It states that early discussion with infrastructure and service providers is particularly important to help understand their investment plans and critical dependencies.

## 2.2. Department for Education Guidance on Planning Obligations

2.2.1. In April 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) published “Securing developer contributions for education”, non-statutory guidance for local authorities regarding seeking planning obligations towards education provision from residential development. The latest version of this guidance, from August 2023, is attached at Appendix AYA01.

2.2.2. Whilst this is non-statutory, it is important to consider elements of this guidance, as they would carry some weight in a planning context, although this clearly does not supersede or outweigh the CIL regulations as outlined above.

2.2.3. The purpose of the guidance is underpinned by four principles, as set out below:

- Housing development should mitigate its impact on community infrastructure, including schools;
- Pupil yield factors should be based on up-to-date evidence from recent housing developments;
- Developer contributions towards new school places should provide both funding for construction and land where applicable, subject to viability assessment when strategic plans are prepared and using up-to-date cost information;
- The early delivery of new schools within strategic developments should be supported where it would not undermine the viability of the school, or of existing schools in the area.

2.2.4. The third and fourth of these principles are of particular relevance to this report.

### 2.3. Local Authority Pupil Planning Areas

2.3.1. Attached at Appendix AYA02 is the Department for Education's Guidance on Local Authority Pupil Planning Areas from September 2021.

2.3.2. This document provides guidance for local authorities on how pupil planning areas should be structured.

2.3.3. This Guidance sets out, as a guiding principle, that schools located in close proximity, and which pupils could reasonably attend, should be grouped together in one planning area.

2.3.4. This Guidance also sets out that, when reviewing pupil planning area structures, local authorities should consider the following factors:

- Geographical characteristics;
- Parental preference patterns;
- Distance to nearest school/s.

2.3.5. Once Planning Areas have been set, these can be amended if required. Where a local authority experiences difficulty in planning school places effectively because it believes basic need within an area is being masked, it should review the structure of its pupil planning areas.

2.3.6. The impact of changes that have taken place or will shortly take place such as housing developments, schools opening or closing and any infrastructure changes, such as new roads should be assessed, and a PA structure should be designed to reflect the changed landscape more effectively.

2.3.7. A local authority may also wish to reflect on its PA structure where no such changes have occurred, but it has other reasons for reviewing. For example, an increase in inward migration or birth rate, or higher pupil numbers now impacting on the secondary sector.

2.3.8. The Appeal decision at Coombe Hill, (appeal reference APP/G1630/W/20/3257625, and attached at Appendix AYA03) noted that, where a development was in an area close to planning area boundaries, it may be appropriate to consider multiple planning areas as being relevant.

### 3. Planning Context and the Proposed Application Site

#### 3.1. Planning Context & Bexhill Growth Area

3.1.1. Rother District Council (RDC) is preparing a new Local Plan to meet its development needs in full up to 2042. RDC is currently undertaking a consultation on its Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan.

3.1.2. RDC's Development Strategy proposed significant growth in the "North Bexhill Growth Area". The various Sites which form part of this proposed growth area are set out in the map below

3.1.3. Catesby Estates Limited and Rurban Estates have an interest in Site BX39 (Land West of Ninfield Road) and BX36, Land at Watermill Lane.



3.1.4. The overall indicated dwelling numbers for all sites in the North Bexhill Growth Area is 2,119.

### 3.2. Education Impacts of Growth Area

3.2.1. The most recent published guidance on developer contributions from ESCC is dated 2015, and does not include information on pupil yield figures.

3.2.2. In order to assess a likely yield from the proposed development, the DfE's published child yield figures for the RDC area have been calculated as follows:

**Pupil Yield is split by School phase and School type for Rother**

Chart Table

Academic Year	Local authority	School type	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Special Schools/AP
2021/22	Rother	Mainstream	0.063	0.256	0.129	2
2021/22	Rother	Special School	2	2	2	0.013

3.2.3. Applying these PPRs to the proposed development site of 445-500 dwellings would give the following child yields as a range. We have also used these figures to calculate the likely yield from the Growth Area in its totality (and assuming no reduction in numbers for school site provision):

Phase	Yield (445 Dwellings)	Yield (500 Dwellings)	Growth Area (2,119 dwellings)
<b>Early Years</b>	28.035	31.5	133.497
<b>Primary</b>	113.92	128.0	542.464
<b>Secondary</b>	57.405	64.5	273.351

3.2.4. This level of yield would be achieved on completion of all dwellings in the growth area, and equates to almost 2.6FE of primary age pupils.

3.2.5. The overall policy for the growth area is BX29 which sets out, amongst other requirements:

*"A new Primary School with Early Years Nursery provision, to serve the North-west Bexhill area, to be so located to enable the maximum proportion of planned new homes within the Growth Area to be within walking distance of it"*

3.2.6. In the supporting text the following is also provided:

*"A new primary school is likely to be required, to ensure there is provision within walking distance to serve future residents. There is a planned primary school at Worsham Farm, in north-east Bexhill, and consequently, the additional need will be in the western part of the growth area. Two potential options for its location are set out in this Plan."*

3.2.7. The Regulation 18 Local Plan currently identifies two potential sites for a primary school, and nursery provision: Site BX39 and BX37.

3.2.8. DfE guidance on new primary schools indicates that, for financial stability and viability, the preference is for a minimum of a 2FE (420 place) school.

### 3.3. New school site – current options

3.3.1. A home to school travel distance of greater than two miles (or the absence of a safe, accompanied, walking route) gives rise to a requirement for the provision of free transport by the local education authority for pupils under the age of 8, and the same applies, at a distance of three miles for those over 8 years of age, as indicated by the DfE in its document "Home to school travel and transport guidance" [source: Appendix AYA04].

3.3.2. In order to assess the likely impact of the proposed development regarding primary school place provision we have considered the impact on schools within a two-mile distance of the proposed development site. To consider the impact on secondary school place provision, this distance has been increased to three miles.

3.3.3. We consider this approach is reasonable in assessing the likely overall impact on local places of the proposed development.

3.3.4. In assessing the relative locations of potential schools RDC's policy has put forward an indicative walking distance of 800m, which is clearly more prescriptive than that used by the DfE.

3.3.5. The map below indicates the site and the location of local primary schools. The locations of these schools are indicated below (the yellow icons indicate single school locations of primary schools) and the red polygon indicates the location of the site. The blue polygons are other strategic sites and the blue icons are potential locations for primary school provision within strategic sites:



3.3.6. The following table indicates the straight-line distance from the approximate centre point of each strategic site to each of the proposed school locations and to the nearest existing primary school (in order for a comparison with the RDC policy provision these have been measured in metres). These are straight line distances since many of these sites are currently open fields with no existing footpaths or roadways:

Allocation Ref	Distance to site 1 (BX39)	Distance to site 2 (BX37)	Nearest School	Distance to nearest existing school
BX31	758m	286m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.08km
BX32	1.1km	656m	All Saints CofE Primary	881m
BX33	1.18km	632m	All Saints CofE Primary	1.06km
BX34	1.59km	1.08km	All Saints CofE Primary	900m
BX35	1.76km	1.28km	All Saints CofE Primary	649m
BX36	1.59km	1.02km	All Saints CofE Primary	1.18km
BX37	568m	0m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.19km
BX38	345m	335m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.00km
BX39	0m	560m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.19km
BX40	335m	297m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.30km
BX41	1.99km	1.59km	All Saints CofE Primary	298m
BX42	809m	997m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	538m
BX43	885m	1.03km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	462m
BX50	1.84km	1.53km	All Saints CofE Primary	48m

3.3.7. The above table shows that, in terms of the number of strategic allocations where the centre point is within 800m of potential school site, the proposed locations would be ranked in the following order:

- Site 2 - 7 Strategic allocations within 800 metres of the proposed school site;
- Site 1 - 5 Strategic allocations within 800 metres of the proposed school site.

3.3.8. This should mean that consideration is given to Site 2, since this is demonstrably better in meeting the walking distance requirement of RDC.

## 4. The Local Position & Timing of Need

### 4.1. Local Primary Schools – Current Baseline

4.1.1. There are eight primary schools within two straight line miles of the proposed development site.

4.1.2. According to the latest data available in the public domain, in January 2025 the position at local primary schools (including infant and junior schools) is as shown in the table below.

School Name	Straight Line	Walking Distance	Net Capacity	Number on Roll (NOR)	Surplus Places
Glenleigh Park Primary Academy *	0.57	1.3	390	373	17
All Saints Church of England Primary School, Bexhill *	0.81	1.4	225	296	0
King Offa Primary Academy *	1.31	2.1	458	423	35
Chantry Community Primary School	1.42	2.3	210	205	5
Little Common School *	1.5	2.4	630	622	8
St Peter and St Paul CofE Primary School	1.69	2.7	420	419	1
Ninfield Church of England Primary School	1.94	2	140	137	3
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	1.95	2.6	211	208	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2,684</b>		<b>72</b>

**Table:** Primary School pupil places with a two-mile walking distance of the site.  
[source: data from DfE website]

\* - these schools include nursery classes in NOR but nursery capacity is not included in Net Capacity figure

4.1.3. The above table uses the Audit Commission definition of Surplus Places, in line with best practice in this matter, which treats schools with a negative surplus as though they had a zero surplus. Since the number of pupils a school must admit in any year is directly related to its capacity, any school that chooses to admit numbers beyond that level must necessarily be deemed to be capable of accommodating those numbers.

4.1.4. On the above evidence it is clear that in January 2025 there were **72** surplus primary school places within local schools.

4.1.5. The total of surplus places as a percentage of primary school capacity was **2.68%** [calculation: 72 / 2684].

## 4.2. The Trend in Annual Local Birth Numbers

4.2.1. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) birth rate figures show the total annual births within the Bexhill area are at their lowest levels in the last eleven years and **have fallen by 2.5FE** from a peak in 2016.

4.2.2. This is best illustrated by the table below:

<b>Live births in England and Wales for small geographic areas</b>												
ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 17 February 2026]												
<b>Area</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
ward2018: Central	70	68	63	69	67	66	67	56	47	64	-	-
ward2018: Collington	17	9	16	15	15	14	15	21	9	13	-	-
ward2018: Kewhurst	28	27	24	25	36	26	19	24	27	25	-	-
ward2018: Old Town	34	45	25	24	43	42	36	33	45	41	-	-
ward2018: Sackville	38	35	31	35	25	28	35	31	18	21	-	-
ward2018: Sidley	63	73	73	93	78	57	67	61	73	70	-	-
ward2018: St Marks	21	17	20	31	20	19	24	29	30	31	-	-
ward2018: St Michaels	47	34	41	60	39	43	50	32	39	39	-	-
ward2018: St Stephens	32	27	35	40	42	42	37	30	40	33	-	-
ward2023:Bexhill Central	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54	50
ward2023:Bexhill Collington	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	15
ward2023:Bexhill Kewhurst	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	20
ward2023:Bexhill Old Town & Worsham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46	47
ward2023:Bexhill Pebsham & St Michaels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	40
ward2023:Bexhill Sackville	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	21
ward2023:Bexhill Sidley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	57
ward2023:Bexhill St Marks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	35
ward2023:Bexhill St Stephens	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>315</b>

4.2.3. Those children born in 2015 will be entering Year 7 in September 2026 and the 2021 births will be due to start primary school in September 2026 and secondary school seven years later (approximately, given the difference between calendar year and academic year).

4.2.4. Commentary on the relevance of this position with regards to the education mitigation strategy is set out later in this Report.

#### 4.3. ESCC Forecast of Primary Pupil Places

4.3.1. The site is located in the Bexhill Primary planning area.

4.3.2. It should be noted that large scale strategic sites may be delivered beyond the local plan period, and therefore beyond the end of the forecast periods.

4.3.3. Based on the ESCC School Organisation Plan 2025-2029, the latest data which has been published, the forecasts for this area are as follows:

Primary Planning Area / Number of Schools in Planning Area	Actual NET Capacity		Actual and Forecast Numbers on Roll		Surplus / Deficit Places	
	23/24	28/29	23/24	28/29	23/24	28/29
Bexhill Primary (8 / 10)	3,097	3,097	2,904	2,834	193	263

**Table:** Forecast Primary School pupil places by academic year

[Source: School Forecast Data from ESCC School Organisation Plan 2025-2029, appended at APPENDIX AYA05].

4.3.4. On the basis of these ESCC school forecasts and school capacities it appears that the current level of surplus primary school places will increase over the coming years to 2028/29 in the local planning area.

4.3.5. It should also be noted that, since 2018/19, capacity in this area has been reduced by 73 places, although it is unclear how this reduction has taken place and whether it could be reinstated if required.

4.3.6. It is unclear to what extent these forecasts include anticipated growth in pupil numbers generated by new housing.

4.3.7. The position in the forecasts above is complicated by the fact that the site for new Primary provision within the Bexhill area has been reserved at Worsham but is not included in forecast capacity. It is unclear if the forecasts include pupils arising from that same development.

4.3.8. Commentary on the relevance of this position with regards to the education mitigation strategy is set out below.

#### 4.4. AYA Assessment of the Future Requirement for Primary School Places

4.4.1. The likely child yield impact of the proposed development within the North Bexhill Growth Area is set out at 3.2.3 above.

4.4.2. At primary level, the overall impact of the proposed Growth Area development is likely to require new primary provision. In line with DfE guidance, this should be at a minimum of 2FE.

4.4.3. DfE guidance quoted at 2.2.3 above states that early delivery of new schools on strategic developments should not jeopardise existing provision. Such jeopardy occurs when there is a significant surplus of places forecast.

4.4.4. The level of surplus forecast (263 places) would meet the impact of around 1,000 new homes being completed and occupied (at 0.259 primary pupils per home).

4.4.5. To that extent, any new school is not required for several years into the development of the Growth Area.

4.4.6. When such mitigation may be required will therefore depend on:

- the number of other sites in the Growth area coming forward within a similar time period;
- and the extent to which the whole of the Growth area can be expected to contribute towards any necessary new school or school expansions.

## 5. Land at Watermill Lane

### 5.1. Alternative Option

5.1.1. An alternative option for a primary school has been put forward by Catesby Strategic Land Limited and Rurban Estates Limited. The land lies to the north of the proposed site allocation BX36 adjacent to Windmill Lane.

5.1.2. I have been asked to assess this site in terms of its feasibility and how it performs against the options identified by Rother District Council.

5.1.3. The site extends to 2.06 hectares and lies to the west of Windmill Lane. A plan is attached at APPENDIX AYA06. The Plan indicates a 2FE primary school, with early years provision.

5.1.4. This plan can also be demonstrated to meet all aspects of DfE school site area guidance, contained within DfE Building Bulletin 103, the relevant extract of which is attached at APPENDIX AYA07.

### 5.2. Assessment of all options

5.2.1. The map below incorporates the proposed location of a primary school at Watermill Lane, along with the previously identified sites at BX39 and BX37:



5.2.2.The table used above is now reproduced to include the site at Watermill Lane:

Allocation Ref	Distance to site 1 (BX39)	Distance to site 2 (BX37)	Distance to site 3 (Watermill Lane)	Nearest School	Distance to nearest existing school
BX31	758m	286m	703m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.08km
BX32	1.1km	656m	671m	All Saints CofE Primary	881m
BX33	1.18km	632m	375m	All Saints CofE Primary	1.06km
BX34	1.59km	1.08km	446m	All Saints CofE Primary	900m
BX35	1.76km	1.28km	759m	All Saints CofE Primary	649m
BX36	1.59km	1.02km	212m	All Saints CofE Primary	1.18km
BX37	568m	0m	865m	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.19km
BX38	345m	335m	1.17km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.00km
BX39	0m	560m	1.42km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.19km
BX40	335m	297m	1.11km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	1.30km
BX41	1.99km	1.59km	1.22km	All Saints CofE Primary	298m
BX42	809m	997m	1.59km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	538m
BX43	885m	1.03km	1.62km	Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	462m
BX50	1.84km	1.53km	1.34km	All Saints CofE Primary	48m

5.2.3.The above table shows that, in terms of the number of strategic allocations where the centre point is within 800m of potential school site, the proposed locations would be ranked in the following order:

- Site 2 - 7 Strategic allocations within 800 metres of the proposed school site;
- Site 3 - 6 Strategic allocations within 800 metres of the proposed school site;
- Site 1 - 5 Strategic allocations within 800 metres of the proposed school site.

5.2.4.Two of the three proposed school locations are in the control of Catesby, and initial plans have been drawn up to show how a school at location 3 would work. Given the site constraints of location 1, location 3 is the preferred option for Catesby and a school can be delivered here with relative ease, since it requires no preliminary housing works to be undertaken to access the site, and can be delivered alongside housing developments on all strategic sites.

5.2.5. This should mean that consideration is given to Site 2, since this is demonstrably better in meeting the walking distance requirement of RDC, but that ,as an alternative to Site2, the site at Watermill Lane is the preferred next option.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1. Commentary and Conclusion of Required Mitigation for the Growth area

6.1.1. The development of the North Bexhill Growth area will be staggered over a lengthy time period, and is likely to deliver around 2,100 dwellings.

6.1.2. The indicative yield of this scale of development is set out at 3.2.3 above, and is likely to require an additional 2FE primary school, which is unlikely to be needed before the completion of around 1,000 dwellings in the Growth Area.

6.1.3. As part of the research for this report, we have considered whether BX39 should provide and it is our opinion that BX39 would not meet the policy requirements for accessibility for the majority of the Growth area, and that there are alternative sites that would be better suited for such provision.

## 7. Appendices

7.1. The following Appendices accompany this document:

- APPENDIX AYA01 - DfE Guidance on Securing Developer Contributions, November 2019;
- APPENDIX AYA02 - DfE Guidance on Local Authority Planning Areas, September 2021;
- APPENDIX AYA03 - Combe Hill, Gloucester Appeal Decision;
- APPENDIX AYA04 - DfE Guidance on Home to School Transport;
- APPENDIX AYA05 - ESCC School Organisation Plan 2025-2029;
- APPENDIX AYA06 - Illustrative School Masterplan;
- APPENDIX AYA07 - DfE Building Bulletin 103 extract.



Department  
for Education

# Securing developer contributions for education

April 2019

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## **Summary**

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to help local authorities secure developer contributions for education so that housing developers contribute to the cost of providing the new school places required due to housing growth. The guidance promotes good practice on pupil yield evidence, engagement with local planning authorities and the delivery of expanded or new schools with funding from housing development.

## **Expiry or review date**

This guidance will be reviewed as necessary (for example, in response to changes in legislation or government policy).

## **Who is this publication for?**

This guidance is for local authorities with a responsibility for providing sufficient school places under the Education Act 1996. It may also be a source of information for local planning authorities and other stakeholders involved in the delivery of schools.

## Introduction

Government is committed to ensuring that there are enough good new school places to meet local needs, while also driving forward an ambitious housing agenda to increase housing delivery, home ownership and the creation of new garden communities. The timely provision of infrastructure with new housing is essential in meeting these objectives to secure high quality school places where and when they are needed.

DfE expects local authorities to seek developer contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from housing development. You should consider the recommendations in this guidance alongside National Planning Practice Guidance on the evidence, policies and developer contributions required to support school provision.

This guidance is for local authorities with a responsibility to provide sufficient school places under the Education Act 1996. The guidance does not:

- Advise the construction/development industry on its duties or responsibilities in paying for infrastructure;
- Replace or override any aspects of other DfE publications such as guidance on [SCAP](#) and the [Admissions Code](#), or policy/guidance produced by other government departments;
- Make recommendations for individual schools or academy trusts on managing their capacity or published admission numbers;
- Propose new DfE policy on setting up new schools ([central](#) or [presumption](#) route), parental preference or the academy system.

## Purpose

As a local authority with education responsibilities, you already provide evidence of education need and demand for use by planning authorities in plan- and decision-making. This guidance draws on existing good practice and is intended to help you establish a robust and consistent evidence base, underpinned by the following principles:

- Housing development should mitigate its impact on community infrastructure, including schools;
- Pupil yield factors should be based on up-to-date evidence from recent housing developments;
- Developer contributions towards new school places should provide both funding for construction and land where applicable, subject to viability assessment when strategic plans are prepared and using up-to-date cost information;
- The early delivery of new schools within strategic developments should be supported where it would not undermine the viability of the school, or of existing schools in the area.

There is great value in detailed local methodologies and guidance that explain to all stakeholders the process and reasons for the collection of developer contributions for

education in that area. This guidance is not intended to replace local approaches, which often provide detail on:

- The approach to seeking contributions for education from affordable housing.
- Types/sizes of homes that will be excluded from calculations of developer contributions.
- Education projects developer contributions may fund.
- The minimum viable size of new schools.
- Assumptions about the schools children from a development will attend, when assessing available capacity in affected schools.
- Minimum surplus capacity to allow for fluctuations in demand and parental choice, not counted as available when calculating developer contributions.
- Contributions 'in kind' (land and/or construction).
- Requirements on size and suitability of school sites, including checklists, exemplar layouts and facility specifications.
- Standard planning obligation clauses.

As local approaches to securing developer contributions for education are reviewed, they should take account of updated National Planning Practice Guidance, this guidance, and the Department's emerging national methodology for the calculation of pupil yields from housing development.

## **Mechanisms for securing developer contributions**

1. Developer contributions for education are secured by means of conditions attached to planning permission, a planning obligation under Section 106 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL revenues are intended to help fund the supporting infrastructure needed to address the cumulative impact of development across a local authority area. CIL can be used to fund the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of a wide range of infrastructure, including education. Alternatively, a Section 106 planning obligation secures a contribution directly payable to the local authority for education (or direct provision of a school 'in kind'), though a planning obligation must comply with the following tests set out in the CIL Regulations<sup>1</sup>, requiring it to be:

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
- Directly related to the development
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

2. Government intends to revise the CIL Regulations, including the removal of the 'pooling restriction' on the use of planning obligations to fund the same type of infrastructure or infrastructure project. We advise you to work with local planning

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation 122 of [The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010](#).

authorities in devising their approaches to securing developer contributions, to consider the most appropriate mechanism (Section 106 planning obligations and/or CIL) to secure contributions from developers towards education alongside other infrastructure funding priorities.

3. It is important that the impacts of development are adequately mitigated, requiring an understanding of:

- The education needs arising from development, based on an up-to-date pupil yield factor;
- The capacity of existing schools that will serve development, taking account of pupil migration across planning areas and local authority boundaries;
- Available sources of funding to increase capacity where required; and
- The extent to which developer contributions are required and the degree of certainty that these will be secured at the appropriate time.

4. The local authority providing children's services is not always the charging authority for the purposes of collecting and distributing CIL. In two-tier areas where education and planning responsibilities are not held within the same local authority, planning obligations may be the most effective mechanism for securing developer contributions for education, subject to the tests outlined in paragraph 1. The use of planning obligations where there is a demonstrable link between the development and its education requirements can provide certainty over the amount and timing of the funding you need to deliver sufficient school places. We recommend that planning obligations allow enough time for developer contributions to be spent (often this is 10 years, or no time limit is specified).

5. Central government basic need grant, the DfE free schools programme and other capital funding do not negate housing developers' responsibility to mitigate the impact of their development on education. When the DfE free schools programme is delivering a new school for a development, we expect the developer to make an appropriate contribution to the cost of the project, allowing DfE to secure the school site on a peppercorn basis and make use of developer contributions towards construction. National Planning Practice Guidance explains how local planning authorities should account for development viability when planning for the provision of infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> There should be an initial assumption that both land and funding for construction will be provided for new schools planned within housing developments.

6. While basic need funding can be used for new school places that are required due to housing development, we would expect this to be the minimum amount necessary to maintain development viability, having taken into account all infrastructure requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). Construction costs include ICT and furniture and equipment required for the delivery of the school.

Where you have a reasonable expectation of developer funding being received for certain school places,<sup>3</sup> and you have declared this in your SCAP return (or plan to do so), then basic need funding should not be considered available for those school places other than as forward funding to be reimbursed by developer contributions later.

7. There are other options besides basic need grant for forward-funding school places, including the use of local authority borrowing powers where necessary. Where developer contributions have been secured through a planning obligation, you can recoup the borrowing costs from developer contributions later, provided these costs have been incurred as a result of housing growth. Local authorities can bid for funding under government grant programmes such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) as they become available, while developers delivering schools directly as an ‘in kind’ contribution may be eligible for loan funding from DfE or Homes England, allowing a new school to be delivered at an earlier stage in the development than would have been possible otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

## Evidence of pupil yields from housing development

8. Pupil yield factors should be based on up-to-date evidence from recent local housing developments, so you can forecast the education needs for each phase and type of education provision arising from new development. As well as being useful for pupil place planning across your area, pupil yield factors allow you to estimate the number of early years, school and post-16 places required as a direct result of development, underpinning the contributions agreed in planning obligations. We are working on a detailed methodology for calculating pupil yields from housing development, to be published in due course.

9. While many early years settings fall within the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, local authorities have a duty to ensure early years childcare provision within the terms set out in the Childcare Acts 2006 and 2016. DfE has scaled up state-funded early years places since 2010, including the introduction of funding for eligible 2 year olds and the 30 hours funded childcare offer for 3-4 year olds. The take-up has been high, increasing demand for early years provision. All new primary schools are now expected to include a nursery. Developer contributions have a role to play in helping to fund additional nursery places required as a result of housing growth, however they may be provided, in particular where these are proposed as part of school expansions or new schools.

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with a local plan’s viability assessment, policies and/or an infrastructure funding statement.

<sup>4</sup> Guidance on the [Home Building Fund](#).

10. You are also responsible for ensuring sufficient schools for pupils receiving primary and secondary education up to the age of 19. Furthermore, you must secure sufficient education and training provision for young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, up to the age of 25.<sup>5</sup> Pupil yield data should identify the number of students living in recent housing developments, aged 16-19 (without an EHC plan) and up to the age of 25 (with an EHC plan). We advise you to seek developer contributions for expansions required to sixth form and special educational needs and disabilities (SEN) provision, commensurate with the need arising from the development.

11. To determine the need for SEN provision, pupil yield data should identify the number of pupils/learners within recent local housing developments who attend special schools, pupil referral units or alternative provision, SEN units and resourced provision within mainstream schools. It is reasonable and fair to seek developer contributions for SEN provision in direct proportion to the needs arising from planned housing development, applying the same principle to SEN provision as to mainstream. There is no standard capacity assessment applicable to special schools and other types of non-mainstream education, as their ability to accommodate pupils depends on the specific needs of each child. However, an increase in housing will lead to an increase in SEN, and we advise you to seek developer contributions for all special school/SEN places generated by a development, where there is a need for additional SEN provision. Greater travel distances to special schools and alternative provision should not affect your consideration of whether a planning obligation meets the legal tests outlined in paragraph 1.

12. We advise you to identify a range of SEN or other non-mainstream projects and ensure that planning obligations allow you the flexibility to direct funds appropriately within a 10 year period. Non-mainstream provision does not conform to standard class sizes, these being determined according to need. While it may be appropriate to pool contributions towards a new classroom in a special school or SEN unit at a mainstream school, it is equally valid to seek contributions for school building alterations that increase a school's capacity to cater for children with SEN, such as additional space for sensory rooms, facilities to teach independent living skills or practical teaching space.

13. It is not necessary to disaggregate the SEN pupil yield factor according to different complex needs. All education contributions are based on an assessment of probability and averages, recognising that the precise mix of age groups and school choices cannot be known before a development is built. Site-specific factors will always need to be taken into account, but a robust local authority-wide pupil yield factor based on evidence of

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<sup>5</sup> [Participation of young people: education, employment and training.](#)

recent developments will often be sufficient to demonstrate that this need is reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

## Costs of provision

14. The amount of money that you seek to secure through developer contributions for education provision should reflect the current cost of providing school places, linked to the policy requirements in an up-to-date emerging or adopted plan that has been informed by viability assessment.

15. We advise that you base the assumed cost of mainstream school places on national average costs published annually in the DfE school place scorecards.<sup>6</sup> This allows you to differentiate between the average per pupil costs of a new school, permanent expansion or temporary expansion, ensuring developer contributions are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. You should adjust the national average to reflect the costs in your region, using BCIS location factors.<sup>7</sup> We recommend the use of index linking in planning obligations so that contributions are adjusted for inflation at the point they are due.

16. Developer contributions for early years provision will usually be used to fund places at existing or new school sites, incorporated within primary or all-through schools. Therefore, we recommend that the per pupil cost of early years provision is assumed to be the same as for a primary school. Similarly, further education places provided within secondary school sixth forms will cost broadly the same as a secondary school place.

17. Special schools require more space per pupil than mainstream schools, and this should be reflected in the assumed costs of provision. We recommend that developer contributions for special or alternative school places are set at four times the cost of mainstream places, consistent with the space standards in Building Bulletin 104.<sup>8</sup> You can also refer to the National School Delivery Cost Benchmarking report for the costs of delivering SEN school places.<sup>9</sup>

18. Where there is local evidence of higher costs for a particular project, such as a bespoke feasibility study or known site abnormalities, these can be used in preference to the adjusted national average.

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<sup>6</sup> [School places scorecards](#).

<sup>7</sup> Further guidance on doing this will be available with the school place scorecards for 2018 onwards.

<sup>8</sup> [Primary and secondary school design guidance](#).

<sup>9</sup> [National School Delivery Cost Benchmarking: Primary, Secondary and SEN Schools](#), February 2018

## Identifying education projects

19. Local plans and other planning policy documents should set out the expectations for contributions from development towards infrastructure, including education of all phases (age 0-19) and special educational needs.<sup>10</sup> We advise local authorities with education responsibilities to work jointly with relevant local planning authorities as plans are prepared and planning applications determined, to ensure that all education needs are properly addressed, including both temporary and permanent education needs where relevant, such as school transport costs and temporary school provision before a permanent new school opens within a development site. This does not mean double funding the same school places, but allows development to be acceptable in planning terms when it is not possible to open a permanent new school at the point of need. When a permanent new school is delivered (or the relevant financial contribution is received), no further contributions to temporary provision should be required.

20. Government intends to lift the pooling restriction on planning obligations, subject to amended legislation. Following this and where applicable, we recommend that you identify a preferred and 'contingency' school expansion project in a planning obligation, as long as both would comply with the Section 106 tests. This will help you respond to changing circumstances and new information, such as detailed feasibility work leading you to abandon a preferred expansion project.

21. We advise you to consider the realistic potential for schools in your area to expand or increase capacity through other alterations, in discussion with academy trusts, and identify site options for any new schools (within proposed housing developments or on standalone sites). Including suitable projects in the local planning authority's infrastructure funding statement will ensure that developer contributions are clearly identified as the funding source where new schools, expansions or alterations are required due to housing growth. This background work will also minimise the risk of a specified school project in a planning obligation proving undeliverable.

## Safeguarding land for schools

22. National Planning Practice Guidance advises on how local planning authorities should prepare plans and take account of education requirements. We advise you to work with local planning authorities and developers to ensure your long-term pupil place planning objectives are reflected in the development plan (and masterplans where these

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<sup>10</sup> [National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

do not form part of the development plan, such as supplementary planning documents).<sup>11</sup> Precise policies can aid decision-making later, setting out the total amount of land required for education, and the approach to securing equitable developer contributions when one developer provides the land for a new school, though the need for the school is generated by more than one development or phase.

23. You may wish to safeguard additional land when new schools within development sites are being planned, to allow for anticipated future expansion or the reconfiguration of schools to create a single site. 'Future-proofing' can sometimes be achieved informally through a site layout that places open space adjacent to a school site. Where justified by forecast need for school places, additional land can be designated specifically for education use and made available for purchase by the local authority within an agreed timescale, after which the land may be developed for other uses.

24. While developers can only be expected to provide free land to meet the education need from their development, the allocation of additional land should also preclude alternative uses, enabling you to acquire the site at an appropriate cost. Land equalisation approaches can be used in multi-phase developments to ensure the development 'hosting' a new school (and any additional safeguarded land) is not disadvantaged. Nevertheless, the market price for the land will depend on its permissible uses. Land allocated for educational use in a local plan would usually have no prospect of achieving planning permission for any other uses. Independent land valuation may be required to establish an acquisition cost. National Planning Practice Guidance provides advice on land valuation for the purposes of viability assessment.

25. The use of compulsory purchase powers may be considered a last resort, but in these situations the allocation for educational use would be an important consideration in determining any compensation that would be payable to landowners.

26. Where new schools are planned within housing developments, we advise you to consider whether direct delivery by the developer would represent the best value for money, subject to an appropriate specification and pre-application support from the local planning authority. Advice on complying with state aid and public procurement legislation is provided in the Annex.

## **Strategic developments and new settlements**

27. Garden communities are an increasingly popular way of planning for housing growth at the scale required to meet the country's housing needs. The government is

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<sup>11</sup> The development plan is defined in Section 38 of the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#), and comprises the spatial development strategy, development plan documents and neighbourhood development plans.

supporting a number of garden communities under the Garden Communities Programme. We have published guidance on education provision in garden communities, to assist local planning authorities and Homes England in delivering schools as part of garden communities.<sup>12</sup> We advise you to consider this in conjunction with this guidance on securing developer contributions for education.

28. Strategic planning of urban extensions and new settlements often includes place-making objectives about the early provision of infrastructure, to establish a sense of community and make the place attractive to residents. Early delivery of a school can be problematic if it precedes new housing and draws pupils from existing schools, threatening their viability and resulting in unsustainable travel-to-school patterns. We advise local authorities with education responsibilities to work jointly with local planning authorities and other partners to agree the timing of new school provision, striking an appropriate balance between place-making objectives, education needs and parental preference.

29. Schools can be delivered in single or multiple phases; the best approach will depend on local circumstances and characteristics of the development. Where appropriate, for instance in the early stages of development while the need for school places is growing, developer contributions can be secured for temporary expansions to existing schools if these are required, and transport costs for pupils travelling further than the statutory walking distance.<sup>13</sup> This will allow a permanent new school to be provided in a single construction phase once the development has generated sufficient pupil numbers, rather than phased construction over a longer period. While the existing pupil cohort may not switch schools initially, children living in the development will usually have priority for admission to the new school and will take up these school places over time.

30. As far as possible (and often in relation to primary schools only), new settlements should be expected to meet their full education requirement. Where an onsite school is required, it should be large enough to meet the need generated by the development. While there may be exceptions justified by local circumstances, as a general rule, existing school capacity in the wider area does not need to be taken into account when calculating developer contributions for permanent onsite schools in new settlements, which should be within the statutory walking distance for the pupils living there. This promotes sustainable and healthy travel patterns for young people.

31. When a permanent new school is proposed to be built early in the development of an urban extension or new settlement, you will naturally consider the effect this might have on parental demand and the viability of existing schools. To minimise detrimental

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<sup>12</sup> [Education Provision in Garden Communities](#)

<sup>13</sup> The statutory walking distances are set out in the [Home to School Transport guidance](#)

impacts on existing schools while supporting local planning authorities to plan new communities, you should work with school providers and the relevant Regional Schools Commissioner to promote Admission Arrangements and opening strategies that will maintain equilibrium in school populations across your area. This can include phased delivery, with the initial phase future-proofed for future expansion (such as an oversized assembly hall and dining area) and land safeguarded for the school's expansion when need builds up over a long period, though it is important to secure commitment to the delivery of later phases.

32. You should also work with local planning authorities to ensure that local plans, masterplans and planning obligations require a suitable school site to be made available at the appropriate time. If early school delivery is required, the school site must be identified and agreed at an early stage, giving consideration to its accessibility and condition at the point of transfer.

33. If a new school opens in a single phase below its full capacity while it awaits pupils moving to the development, this does not represent an available surplus for other developments assessing their own impact and mitigation, unless the development delivering the new school will not be completed or generate enough pupils to fill the school. Complementary uses that share the school site can be considered for a temporary period while a new school fills. In practice, you may prefer to deliver the school in phases using modular construction methods, linking capacity more closely to emerging need, though the initial phase must still provide a viable sized school.

34. New housing tends to attract more young families than older housing, yielding higher numbers of pupils particularly in the pre-school and primary age groups, though this stabilises over time until the development resembles the mature housing stock.<sup>14</sup> We advise you to respond to initial peaks in demand, such as planning for modular or temporary classrooms, securing a large enough site to meet the maximum need generated by the development. Where new settlements are planned, you may wish to carry out demographic modelling to understand education requirements in more detail, taking account of similar developments and different scenarios such as an accelerated build rate.

35. Where a requirement for both primary and secondary schools has been identified, we recommend you consider if there would be cost efficiency, space saving and educational benefits in providing an all-through school.

36. There may also be sustainability, efficiency and educational benefits in relocating an existing school, for example where a development is large enough to require a new

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<sup>14</sup> This phenomenon is widely reported in local authority evidence, such as for [Central Bedfordshire](#) and [North Essex Garden Communities](#).

secondary school but it would be too close to an existing secondary school, both of which would be relatively small. Such reorganisation of the school estate, relocating and expanding an existing school on a development site, may be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, if the alternative distribution, size or condition of schools would be unsustainable. Proposed changes are subject to following the relevant process, depending on the category of the school.<sup>15</sup> We advise that you work collaboratively with local planning authorities to ensure your objectives for the school estate are reflected in planning policies and decisions.

37. There is often a degree of uncertainty around the delivery of urban extensions and new settlements, in view of the long timescales involved, multiple developers and changeable market conditions. The build rate of development may be slower than anticipated, while land provided for a school may need to be returned to a developer if it is not used within an agreed period. Therefore, it is important to consider carefully the clauses within planning obligations if they impose any time restriction on the use of transferred education land, and the potential for the overall phasing of developer contributions to cause delays. Where land has to be returned to a developer, this should be on the same terms as it was given; land provided by free transfer should be returned as such.

38. We also advise you to consider any potential uplift in the value of a development following the grant of planning permission and before all housing units are sold or let. It may be possible to secure the full education contribution, where this had previously been reduced on viability grounds, using planning obligation review mechanisms. National Planning Practice Guidance advises further on how viability should be assessed during the lifetime of a project. We recommend that you work with local planning authorities to set out in plans the circumstances where review mechanisms in planning obligations may be appropriate, allowing you to maintain policy compliance on education contributions when circumstances have changed.

39. To support the delivery of strategic development at pace, you may need to forward-fund school provision within an urban extension or new settlement, using basic need funding or local authority borrowing if necessary and recouping these costs later through developer contributions secured by a planning obligation. While we recognise there are some inherent risks to this, our position on the use of basic need funding and other forward-funding options is set out in paragraphs 5-7 above.

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<sup>15</sup> [School organisation guidance and transparency data.](#)

# Annex

## Developer delivery of new schools

1. Direct delivery of new schools by housing developers may represent good value for money. This model of delivery should not contravene state aid or public procurement rules. While we advise you to seek your own project-specific legal advice when necessary, this annex sets out the department's view on the legal position at the time of publication. Local authorities should keep abreast of emerging case law that may have a bearing on this advice, and any legislative changes following the UK's exit from the European Union.<sup>16</sup>

2. While the department supports developer delivery of schools in principle, the local authority's control over the design specification and timescale for opening will be reduced, so we recognise it will not always be the preferred option. Nevertheless, high quality design and performance should still be achieved through the planning and building control process, and compliance with national standards such as the DfE building bulletins, output specification and other design standards and guidance.<sup>17</sup>

3. When developer delivery is proposed, it is a good idea to include a clause within a planning obligation requiring design disputes to be referred to an independent expert or design panel, so the local authority is not the ultimate decision-maker on the design specification. This does not preclude a partnership approach between the local authority, academy trust (where relevant) and developer to negotiate a brief and design specification; such collaboration is good practice and helps to avoid disputes.

4. Furthermore, we recommend that planning obligations allow local authorities to step in and deliver the school if developer delivery falls through but the school is still required. Longstop clauses should ensure that the land for the school is transferred early enough for the local authority to intervene and provide the school at the right time. In these situations, the planning obligation should also require financial contributions to be made in lieu of the 'in kind' provision of the school by the developer, making use of review mechanisms where necessary to respond to changing circumstances.

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of publication, current rules are expected to be preserved in domestic law. See [The State Aid \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#) (draft) and [EU Exit guidance on public-sector procurement](#).

<sup>17</sup> [School design and construction guidance](#).

## State Aid

5. In some cases, all relevant parties will support developer delivery of a new school, but the local authority accepts that the developer cannot fully fund the new school and its delivery would need a degree of public subsidy. It is important this this does not constitute unlawful state aid to the developer.<sup>18</sup>

6. The question is whether a contribution by a local authority to the cost of the school (otherwise being funded by the developer under a planning obligation) is a grant of incompatible state aid to that developer. The answer depends on the circumstances that give rise to the local authority's contribution. There are two principal questions. Has the public contribution arisen:

- (a) Because planning law/policy only requires the developer to make a partial contribution; or
- (b) Because the local authority has otherwise volunteered to make this contribution?

### **Planning law/policy only requires the developer to make a partial contribution**

7. This is unlikely to give rise to incompatible state aid (unlawful). If planning law/policy only requires the developer to make a partial contribution then no incompatible state aid should arise merely because the local authority (or another public sector body) funds the balance of those costs. This is subject to the relevant public sector body satisfying itself (through benchmarking and/or a cost consultant's report) that the developer's costs of building the school are not more than market costs. This would apply even if the initial application of planning policy dictated that the developer makes a full contribution but after applying planning viability principles (taking account of the total infrastructure burden on the development) the developer's contribution was reduced.

8. National Planning Practice Guidance says that for the purpose of plan making, an assumption of 15-20% of gross development value may be considered a suitable return to developers, in order to establish the viability of plan policies. A local authority's contribution to school delivery which supports a higher profit margin for a particular developer may be considered a voluntary contribution (see below) and a selective benefit to one developer, which may amount to unlawful state aid.

9. The rationale for this assessment is that the key state aid test to be applied to the developer is whether it has selectively benefitted from the local authority's contribution. For example, if under planning law/policy it (or any other developer) would have only been required to fund 60% of the school's costs then it has not selectively benefitted as another developer (in identical circumstances) would also only be required to make the

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<sup>18</sup> Guidance relating to [state aid](#) and [CIL](#), and [The State Aid \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(draft\)](#).

same 60% contribution. The extent of the local authority's contribution (if required) will usually be determined through viability assessment.

### **The local authority has otherwise volunteered to make this contribution**

10. A voluntary contribution by the local authority would raise an issue that its funding may grant a selective benefit to the developer and could amount to incompatible state aid (unlawful).

11. The local authority may require a larger school than the development must provide, such as an increase to two forms of entry (2FE) when the development generates a need for a 1.5FE school. This may constitute a voluntary contribution but would not provide a selective benefit to the developer, provided any other developer in identical circumstances would receive the same contribution for additional school places, so in such circumstances the risk that this would amount to incompatible state aid is considered low.

### **Public works contracts (OJEU procurement)**

12. It is possible to place a Section 106 planning obligation on a developer to provide a school without triggering a 'public works contract' which would require the local authority to undertake procurement under the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) or the equivalent following the UK's exit from the EU. However, it is important that a number of principles contained in relevant case law<sup>19</sup> are complied with:

- a) there is no positive works obligation on the developer to build the school in any event (meaning could the planning authority force the developer to build the school even if that developer never implemented its planning permission); and/or
- b) The public body has no 'decisive influence' on the design of the school. (The public authority is entitled to contribute to discussions about, be consulted on and set parameters about the building (e.g. compliance with national standards) but not have the ultimate decision about the works specification).

13. Most planning obligations requiring the delivery of new schools include trigger points that link the provision of infrastructure to the occupation of homes. Section 106 planning obligations that are only triggered when planning permission is substantially implemented may be considered conditional rather than constituting a positive works obligation. The developer would not be legally obligated to perform the works and could walk away from them at any time, until the development commenced.

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<sup>19</sup> The Queen (on the application of Midlands Co-operative Society Limited) and Birmingham City Council [2012] EWHC 620 (admin); Helmut Muller GmbH v Bundesanstalt für Immobilienaufgaben (C-451/08); R (Faraday Development Ltd.) v. West Berkshire Council & Anor [2016] EWHC 2166 (Admin)

14. The extent to which a contracting authority can become involved in the design of works before it is deemed to be "specifying" such works has been explored in case law and guidance.<sup>20</sup>

15. A contract would only be deemed a public works contract if the contracting authority took measures to define the type of work to be undertaken by the developer partner or at the very least had a "decisive influence" on its design. "Requirements specified by the contracting authority" has been taken to exclude the exercise of a public authority's urban planning powers in examining building plans presented to it, or the decision to apply its planning powers in relation to a particular project.

16. The former Office of Government Commerce (OGC) provided further interpretation of the land exemption. In particular they were of the view that:

- (a) national or local land-use planning policies, requirements or restrictions for a site would not in themselves comprise a requirement specified by the contracting authority;
- (b) a broad invitation that a site should be developed in accordance with applicable or national local land-use planning policies but with the developer free to put forward its own intentions, proposals and specifications within these parameters is unlikely to trigger a requirement specified by the contracting authority.

17. Although the OGC no longer exists as a distinct government department, their guidance note has been referenced by the domestic Courts and it is still considered useful guidance in the UK. However, reliance on OGC views may need to be reviewed if their position is overruled by the European Courts or the Commission, or by domestic Courts following the UK's exit from the EU.

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<sup>20</sup> Helmutt Muller GmbH v Bundesanstalt für Immobilienaufgaben (C-451/08) and Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Information Note 12/10 (30 June 2010).



Department  
for Education

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Department  
for Education

# **Local Authority Pupil Planning Areas**

**Guide for local authorities**

**September 2021**

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## About this departmental guidance

This is non-statutory departmental guidance from the Department for Education. It sets out what we expect local authorities to consider when determining, or making changes to, their pupil planning area structure for the purposes of the [School Capacity Survey \(SCAP\)](#).

This guidance relates to the 2022 SCAP survey and the SCAP surveys conducted after 2022.

### Expiry or review date

This guidance is valid until amended or withdrawn.

### Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is primarily for local authorities involved in planning and organising school places.

## Summary of changes

- Clarification on how pupil planning areas should be structured, and clarification of the general principles used to determine pupil planning areas. (Section 2)
- Recommendations on the minimum number of schools that should be contained within primary and secondary pupil planning areas. (Section 3)
- Updates to the criteria used by the department when reviewing pupil planning area structures. (Section 4)
- Updates to the approximate timetable for changing pupil planning areas for the SCAP collection. (Section 5)

## Main Points

- Local authorities should ensure that pupil planning area data reported for the SCAP collection is a true and accurate reflection of the need for school places.
- Local authorities should structure pupil planning areas in accordance with the general principles laid out in this guidance.
- Proposals to structurally change or create pupil planning areas for use in the SCAP data collection process requires approval from the department.
- All local authorities will have a pupil planning area review by the department over a 5-year period. The local authorities with pupil planning areas that diverge most from this guidance will be prioritised.
- Where the general principles laid out in this guidance have not been applied and/or where the planning area structure adopted is likely to generate an overestimated Basic Need capital funding allocation in the local authority, the department may propose regrouping planning areas differently. The department may also defer the decision about a local authority's Basic Need allocation until we can be confident that data submitted represents a true and accurate reflection of the need for school places.

## Introduction

**Local authorities have the discretion to determine their pupil planning areas for the purposes of school place planning though we expect them to have regard to this non-statutory guidance when determining their pupil planning area structure for the purposes of the SCAP collection.**

Local authorities have a duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient schools are available for their area to provide primary and secondary education. Each year the department collects information on school places from local authorities as part of the annual SCAP collection in accordance with the [Information as to Provision of Education \(England\) Regulations 2016 \(SI 2016/555\)](#).

Local authorities are required to provide, for each school within each pupil planning area (PA), information about the number of registered pupils and the capacity of schools in their area. The annual returns also include local authorities' own forecasts of pupil numbers, at PA level, by year group for whom primary and secondary education will need to be provided. The data will be published in the ['School capacity' statistical releases](#). The releases include place planning tables showing modelled estimates of places needed to meet future demand. The department may also use the data in the calculation of future Basic Need capital funding allocations; to aid departmental monitoring of local authority sufficiency, and to support a range of policy developments and operational decisions. The data may be used in conjunction with other local authority surveys, such as the Capital Spend Survey and School Preference Survey, to support departmental decision making. The data also informs decisions pertaining to the locations and sizes of new schools, or school expansions, provided through centrally funded capital programmes.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information on how PAs should be structured to ensure data on the need for school places is accurately reflected and reported. It focusses on the factors local authorities should consider if they are reviewing their current PA structure and the department's process for approving any changes.

## Section 1: Why data is collected at pupil planning area level

Effective pupil place planning is a fundamental element of the local authority's role as strategic commissioner of good school places. It is under-pinned by the use of local area knowledge and data to identify any early warning signs of insufficient numbers of school places in specific parts of the authority. The basic unit of this local knowledge is the 'pupil planning area': **a group of schools within the local authority which is used for the purpose of assessing current and future pupil demand for school place provision.**

We know from previous SCAP collections that for some PAs containing large numbers of schools (for example, one PA across a large county), that the aggregated PA data does not provide full visibility of place pressures if pressure is being masked by surplus capacity in other areas of the authority. Data at a lower granular level is thus recommended to provide a more accurate picture of place pressure. It is also recognised that more detailed data would facilitate the more accurate targeting of Basic Need capital allocations provided by the department to support the creation of new pupil places.

We are also aware that some PAs containing a small number of schools can over-represent pressure and give an inaccurate picture of place pressure. PAs should therefore be an appropriate size for the area to ensure that place pressure is neither masked nor over-represented.

As the landscape changes over time, some PAs may become less appropriate. Local authorities are therefore able to make changes when required to the structure of their PAs and the following sections provide information on the criteria and process by which PAs used in the SCAP survey should be defined. It is also recognised that place pressure can be artificially created by changing a PA structure, therefore robust and stable PAs (ideally stable for at least 5 years) will provide a more accurate picture of need.

### How does the Department use pupil planning areas?

Basic Need capital funding allocations are made to local authorities to help them fund new pupil places by expanding existing schools<sup>1</sup> and by establishing new schools. Allocation decisions made by the department are based principally on data collected from local authorities via the annual SCAP collection. It collects information on the capacity of schools and the local authority's own forecasts of pupil numbers for several years ahead, for each PA of every local authority. Basic Need capital funding is allocated on the basis of a comparison of forecast pupil numbers with school capacity, with shortfalls in capacity attracting funding<sup>2</sup>. The data collected through the SCAP survey also informs the locations and sizes of new schools, or school expansions, provided through centrally funded capital programmes. Decisions on the need for and the location of new schools or school expansions will not be

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<sup>1</sup> Maintained schools, free schools or academies.

<sup>2</sup> More information on Basic Need capital funding allocations can be found here: [Basic need allocations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

made entirely on the basis of the data collected through the SCAP survey, however accurate data using appropriate PA structures help ensure decisions are well informed.

The general principles that should be used to structure PAs are set out in section 2. Where these general principles have not been applied and/or where the structure adopted is likely to cause an overestimated Basic Need funding allocation in the local authority, the department may propose regrouping PAs differently. The department may also defer the decision about a local authority's allocation, until we can be confident that data submitted represents a true and accurate reflection of the need for school places.

Local Authorities have a responsibility for proposing and designing PA structures to reflect local circumstances. However, proposals to structurally change or create PAs for use in the SCAP data collection process will require approval from the department. The process for this is outlined in sections 5 and 6.

## Section 2: How pupil planning areas should be structured and how they can be changed

PAs should be structured separately for primary and secondary phases, and it is usual for local authorities to have multiple PAs.

Pupil place planning is a dynamic process in which factors such as school reorganisation, evolving local demographics or changing geographical factors can mean existing structures are no longer fit for purpose. Changes to these structures are sometimes necessary. However, PAs should be structured to minimise the number of changes that are necessary. It is recommended that PAs should be designed to remain stable for at least 5 years where possible.

Local authorities should reflect on the structure of its PAs regularly to ensure that the structure complies with the general principles set out below. The impact of changes that have taken place or will shortly take place such as housing developments, schools opening or closing and any infrastructure changes, such as new roads should be assessed, and a PA structure should be designed to reflect the changed landscape more effectively. A local authority may also wish to reflect on its PA structure where no such changes have occurred, but it has other reasons for reviewing. For example, an increase in inward migration or birth rate, or higher pupil numbers now impacting on the secondary sector. Where a local authority has identified that a different PA structure is essential, changes can be proposed before 5 years of PA stability.

When reviewing PA structures, local authorities should consider the following factors:

- Geographical characteristics
- Distance to nearest school/s
- Parental preference patterns (see below)

PA structures should also be robust to ensure that minor or known regular changes to the landscape do not necessitate a change to PAs. For example, where it is known that parental preference often changes between a group of schools, grouping these schools in one PA may prevent necessitating a future change to the PA structures.

Where a local authority has divided their geographical regions into areas for pupil place planning purposes and those areas align with the general principles below, the PAs used in the SCAP collection should align with these areas.

## General Principles

**Guiding principle: schools located in close proximity, and which pupils could reasonably attend, should be grouped together in one pupil planning area.**

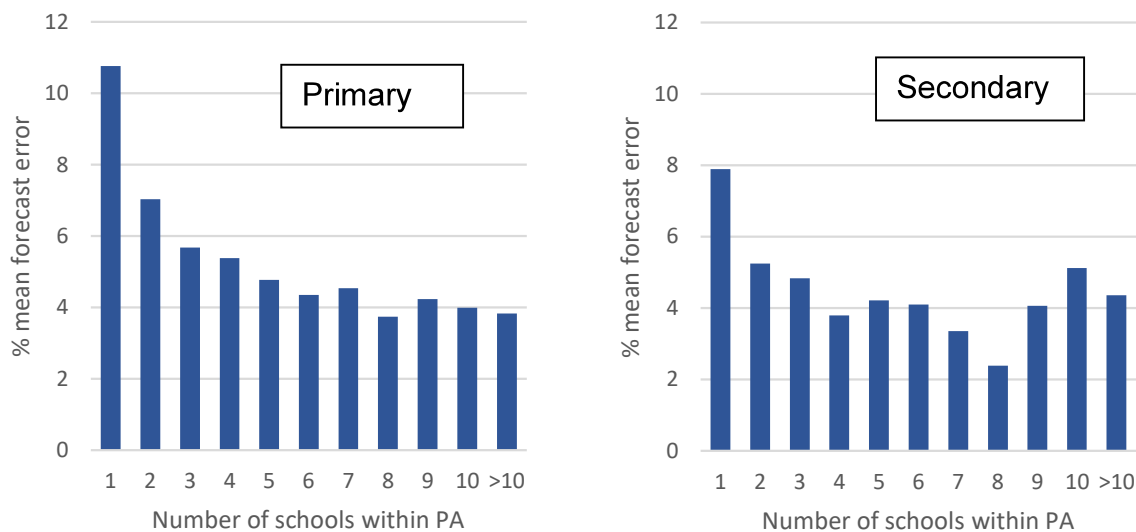
- Individual PAs should contain **existing school capacity** (i.e. should have at least one open school located within them). For the purposes of the SCAP collection, a PA that does not have existing school capacity to report will not be approved.
- For the purposes of the SCAP collection, PAs should contain **more than one school**. The creation of a single school PA should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example, where a school is geographically isolated and it is unreasonable to allocate places at any other school due to distance and travelling time. Proposals for single school PAs will only be approved by the department where the local authority can provide clear evidence that it would be unreasonable to group the school with others in the authority.
- For the purposes of the SCAP collection, the above principle also applies to requests to locate single schools with **discrete characteristics**, such as selective schools, UTCs, faith or free schools, in their own single school PAs.
- For the purposes of the SCAP collection, local authorities should **avoid grouping schools of the above characteristics into separate PAs** overlaid on top of others of the same educational phase. For example, local authorities should avoid grouping all faith schools in a local authority in one PA, regardless of geography, as this can result in the need for places being inaccurately reported. Proposals to create a separate PA for these schools will only be approved by the department in exceptional circumstances, where the local authority can provide clear evidence that it would be unreasonable to include the schools in the existing PAs where they are located (see Section 6 for more information on the evidence that may be required). Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision whether to approve the changes will be made based on the evidence provided for that individual case. Where such PAs are agreed with the department, forecasts of pupil numbers in the PAs containing schools with discrete characteristics collected through the SCAP collection should be capped at current capacity unless there is a shortfall of places in all appropriate underlying PAs.
- Where a local authority operates a **3-tier education system**, it should not, for SCAP reporting purposes, separate the first, middle and upper phased schools into separate PAs. All school places up to Year 6 should be included within the primary PA structure and all places from Year 7 should be included in the secondary PA structure.
- For the purposes of the SCAP collection, local authorities should ensure that all the constituent sites of **split-site schools** are contained within the same PA unless a compelling local case can be made, which the department will consider on its individual merits. For example, the constituent sites not being reasonable alternatives due to distance or travel time. Where the department has agreed that split sites can be contained within different PAs, the local authority may be required to provide additional information for each site during the annual SCAP collection.

- For the purposes of the SCAP collection, PAs should be structured to minimize the need for future changes to the PAs. PAs should remain **fixed for at least 5 years** unless there are compelling reasons to change (changes to PAs which do not require departmental approval are listed in section 5).
- Annex B provides case studies illustrating the department's approach in assessing proposed PA structures in a range of circumstances for SCAP reporting purposes. However, due to the diverse range of geographical sizes and factors relating to the location of schools within local authorities, PA structures do vary and there is no 'one size fits all' structure.

## Section 3: The profile of a pupil planning area structure

As at 1 May 2020, there were 3,630 PAs across 152 local authorities – 2,553 of which were primary PAs and 1,077 secondary PAs.

The accuracy of the forecasts collected via the SCAP survey is crucial to assess shortfalls and surpluses in school capacity and to inform the calculation of Basic Need capital allocations to support new pupil places. The following charts show the mean error in forecast accuracy<sup>3</sup> in primary PAs (on the left) and secondary PAs (on the right) by the number of schools within those PAs.



In general, the larger the number of schools in the PA, the more accurate the forecast. The number of schools in a PA should be determined by whether the schools in the PA represent a reasonable alternative to each other (i.e. pupils who attend one school could also reasonably be expected to attend another in the PA) and the general principles in this guidance. This section recommends a minimum number of schools in a primary and secondary PA, however, these are not meant to be maximum or average numbers for a PA. **In most cases, PAs which align to the general principles in this guidance will be considerably larger than the recommended minimum number of schools stated below.**

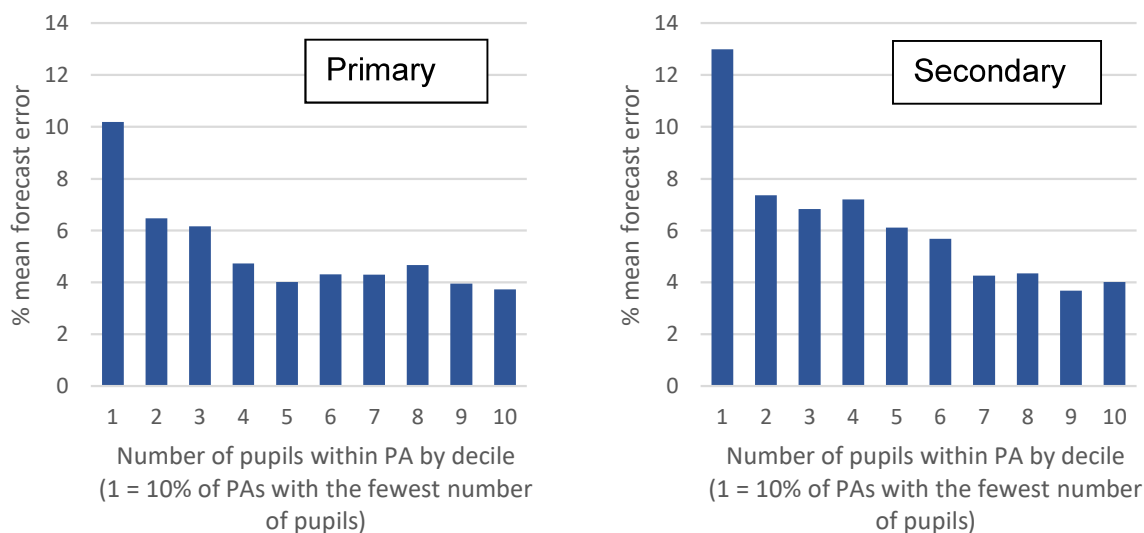
For primary PAs, the mean forecast error rate reduces considerably as the number of schools within the PA increases from 1 to 6. It is recommended that PAs for primary schools contain a minimum of 4 schools but ideally contain 6 or more schools, unless there are exceptional circumstances as described in the general principles. **In many cases PAs should be considerably larger than this, where the schools represent a reasonable alternative to each other.**

<sup>3</sup> Mean forecast error in the 2019/20 forecasts made in the 2017 SCAP collection.

For secondary PAs, the mean forecast error rate reduces considerably as the number of schools within the PA increases from 1 to 2. The mean forecast error rate reduces consistently up to 8 schools, after which the current small number of PAs with 9 or more schools makes any assessment of the mean forecast error less reliable. We understand that the different geographical characteristics of local authorities may make it difficult for some local authorities to have secondary PAs with a larger number of schools. Therefore, it is recommended that PAs for secondary schools contain a minimum of 2 schools unless there are exceptional circumstances as described in the general principles. **In many cases PAs should in many cases be larger than this, where the schools represent a reasonable alternative to each other.**

Note: It may be reasonable for some local authorities with large rural areas containing isolated schools to have a PA structure which includes several PAs containing fewer than the recommended minimum number of schools.

PAs in which a small number of pupils attend schools have also been shown to have a higher mean forecast error rate:



The mean forecast error rate reduces as the number of pupils attending schools in a PA increases, both in primary (on the left) and secondary (on the right) PAs. The number of schools in a PA and the number of pupils attending schools in a PA will usually be closely linked. However, to promote accurate forecasts, it is beneficial for PAs with a smaller number of schools to cover a larger number of pupils if possible.

## Section 4: How consistency is ensured across local authorities

The department undertakes a review of local authorities' PA structures each year in advance of the SCAP data collection. The purpose of this review is to ensure PAs are fit for purpose and there is consistency across authorities of similar size and geographical location or characteristics. All local authorities will have their PAs reviewed over a 5-year period, with the local authorities with PAs that diverge most from this guidance prioritised. When identifying local authorities whose PA structures are to be prioritised to review as part of this exercise, the department uses a range of criteria including the following:

- Local authorities with a lower forecast accuracy than other local authorities with similar socio-economic characteristics (statistical neighbours<sup>4</sup>), over a number of years;
- Local authorities with PA(s) that are not geographically isolated and contain fewer than the recommended minimum number of schools;
- Local authorities whose structures do not correspond with one or more of the general principles set out in section 2 and are not clearly or known to be exceptional circumstances.
- Local authorities who have historically not increased capacity in line with Basic Need capital allocations.
- Local authorities which actually plan and deliver places on a different basis from the PAs they use for the SCAP survey.
- Local authorities which have regularly required changes to PAs outside of the changes which do not require departmental approval (listed in section 5).

The department will detail to Local Authorities identified for review, the specific PAs, data and criteria which appear to diverge most from this guidance.

Those local authorities which are identified as per the above will be contacted by the department to discuss their PA structure and are asked to supply:

- Proposals for changes to the PA structure to bring it into line with the guidance, with robust evidence to support this;
- Or where the local authority considers that changes to the PAs would be detrimental, robust evidence to support the structures of PAs within the authority.
- Where the proposed structure is based on catchment areas and travel distances:
  - robust data detailing this catchment data and supply/demand on places.
  - maps illustrating the PA structure to be adopted
  - information on the distances between schools.
- Where the proposed structure includes any single school PAs:
  - an explanation as to why this is the case;
  - evidence of catchment data for schools' intake years;
  - details of other schools in close proximity.

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<sup>4</sup> See the glossary for more information

- Maps or data showing the flow of pupils which live in one PA and attend schools in another. The heat maps developed by the department, when available, can be used as evidence if appropriate.

Depending on the scale and number of PAs which diverge from this guidance, the department may only require the above details in relation to the specific PAs which the department identified as diverging from this guidance.

The evidence provided is assessed to determine whether the proposed PA structure is appropriate and to ensure that the local authority is not over-estimating or under-estimating when reporting a need for additional places as a result of their PA structure. The department will work with the authority to restructure the PAs if necessary.

Local authorities which have agreed a PA structure with the department after a review will not be prioritised again for review again for at least 5 years, unless essential.

## Section 5: When local authorities need to request changes to pupil planning area structures

Local authorities are encouraged to ensure that their PA structures are robust and likely to be fit for purpose for at least five years. However, they are able to request changes to PAs annually. Any changes to the structure of PAs must be approved by the department prior to the SCAP survey as changes in the number of PAs or changes to their boundaries impact on the data collected. Proposals to change PAs will be assessed against:

- this guidance
- the impact on surpluses or shortfalls
- departmental understanding of the local authority

Only proposals which adhere to the guidance will be taken forward for review. The proposals which are not taken forward may be rejected or deferred until the following year.

However, the local authority can change the structure of a PA without DfE approval **only** where:

- a school previously opened in temporary accommodation is moving to a permanent site which is located in a different PA to the temporary accommodation,
- a new school has opened, in which case the local authority should assign it to the appropriate PA, or
- a school has closed (unless it results in a single school PA or a PA with no existing open school capacity).

Local authorities do not need prior approval for changes to individual school details that do not affect the structure of planning areas. e.g. where there is a change to a school's age range, governance arrangements, name or establishment number, etc. LAs are required to inform the department of these changes via the annual checking of the schools list.

### Timings

Changes to PA structures affect the data that local authorities submit for the annual SCAP collection. For this reason, local authorities need to know if approval has been granted for their proposed PA changes well in advance of the date of the next SCAP collection. The timetable below shows the key dates which local authorities should be aware of if they plan to request changes:

## Timetable for changing pupil planning areas for the SCAP collection

(N.B. the timetable tailored to each SCAP collection with specific dates will be circulated separately)

### September

- Local Authorities which have been identified as priorities for a PA review will be contacted. The department will share the evidence and analysis used to identify the local authority as a priority. The local authority will be asked to begin work with the department to determine and propose new PAs or alternatively provide robust evidence to support the current structures of PAs within the authority.
- All other local authorities receive an email, asking them to confirm their current PA structure is correct.
- Local authorities to confirm by mid to late September that there are no changes to their current structure, or that they wish to request changes.
- (September and October) Local authorities wishing to make changes to provide a clear explanation of the changes, the reasons behind the proposals. Supporting documentation (e.g. maps) should be provided, however where proposals are clearly explained and well evidenced, not all supporting documentation may need to be provided at the time of the requests for change.

### October

- The department to continue to work with local authorities which have been identified as priorities for a PA review to propose new PAs.
- The department to work with local authorities requesting changes to provide any further supporting document required

### November

- The department to triage and prioritise local authority proposals to restructure PAs using the criteria specified in this document.
- Local authorities are made aware of whether proposals have been rejected, deferred or are being fully reviewed.

### December and January

- A full review into the proposals takes place.
- Local authorities proposing changes may be asked to provide further explanation of the changes, the reasons behind the proposals and supporting documentation e.g. maps.

### February

- A list of PAs and schools currently held by the department is sent to local authorities not wishing to make changes to PAs. Local authorities to make any changes to PAs / schools that do not need approval – see section 5.

- The department to inform local authorities wishing to restructure whether the changes have been approved. If not approved, the department and the local authority to discuss further until agreement is reached on the PA structure. An updated list of PAs and schools to be sent to the local authority. Where agreement of the PA structure cannot be reached (because these general principles have not been applied and/or the structure adopted is likely to generate an overestimated Basic Need capital allocation in the local authority), the department may propose regrouping PAs differently.

### **March**

- Local authorities to return final list of PAs and schools correctly assigned in each area by end of March.

The department may be able to informally review proposals outside of this timetable when essential. For example, when planning applications for a new housing development are being considered and that new housing development will necessitate a change to the PA structure, the department can consider the local authority's evidence and provide an "in principle" view on the future PA structure.

## Section 6: The process for considering proposals to amend current pupil planning area structures for the annual SCAP collection

Local authorities wishing to change the structure of their PA should supply the following:

- Supporting documentation to explain the construction of and rationale for the proposed PAs within the authority.
- Where the proposed structure would take the local authority outside the recommendations on the minimum number of schools in a PA, a clear explanation for this.
- Where the structure is framed around catchment areas and travel distances:
  - Data (including mapping information) detailing this catchment data and the supply of and demand for places.
  - Mapping information on the distances between schools.
- Where, in exceptional circumstances, the PA only has one school:
  - An explanation as to why this is the case and, in particular, why it would be unreasonable to expect pupils to travel to the next nearest school, and if the situation has changed from the previous year.
  - Evidence of catchment data for intake years.
  - Details on alternative schools in close proximity.
- Forecasts of pupil numbers for all the PAs which are affected by the proposed changes, and a statement detailing the methodology used for the forecasts.
- A clear rationale supported by documentation should be provided for each other element of the PA structure which does not comply to this guidance.
- Maps or data showing the flow of pupils which live in one PA and attend schools in another. The heat maps developed by the department, when available, can be used as evidence if appropriate.

On receipt of the local authority's rationale and evidence, analysis is undertaken within the department to determine whether the proposals are appropriate and do not overestimate or underestimate the need for additional school places.

We review each case on its own merits and consider a range of factors when reaching a decision, including:

- Does the proposed PA structure seem reasonable compared to other local authorities that are statistical neighbours<sup>5</sup>
- Do the proposed changes align the PA structure to this guidance?
- Will the proposed changes create single school PAs?
- Will the proposed changes create PAs with fewer schools than the recommended minimum number of schools?

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<sup>5</sup> See the glossary for more information

- If the local authority operates a 3-tier education system, could the proposed PA structure create a false picture of shortfalls if there are age range changes within schools?
- Has a robust case been made for each proposal?
- Does analysis of SCAP data indicate that the proposed changes will overestimate or underestimate the need for school places?
- Does the proposed PA have existing schools? We will not approve the creation of a PA if there are no open schools in the proposed area.
- Do the PA boundaries appear reasonable? We consider the location of rivers, roads and railway lines.
- Are the proposed PAs likely to require changing again within the next 5 years?

Local authorities will be advised of the outcome of their request in accordance with the detailed timeline to be issued separately. Where the department is unable to reach an agreement with a local authority on an existing or proposed PA structure, the department may propose regrouping PAs differently. The department will also provide the local authority with details of the reasons why the existing or proposed PA structure is unsuitable.

## Annex A: Glossary

### **Basic need capital allocations**

The department provides Basic Need funding to local authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies, and by establishing new schools. More information can be found at [Basic Need Allocations](#).

### **Net capacity assessment**

The net capacity of a maintained school is measured using a net capacity assessment which is based on the net area of all buildings that are available to that school. This should include all extra places that have been added to the school (even though they may not yet be in use), any classrooms that have been temporarily taken out of use or non-teaching space that has been re-designated as a classroom. Further information on calculating the net capacity assessment of maintained schools can be found in the guidance document: [Assessing the Net Capacity of Schools](#).

### **Pupil planning area (PA)**

An area within the local authority which is used by that authority for the purposes of assessing current and future pupil demand for school place provision. Local authorities may also use the term 'planning area' or 'pupil place planning area' to describe a PA.

### **Pupil forecasts**

Forecasts of pupil numbers broken down by year group for each PA in the local authority.

### **School capacity**

The number of places the school can physically provide. For maintained schools, capacity is defined as a physical measurement using the net capacity assessment (see above). For academies, planned capacity is set out in the funding agreement.

### **Selective schools**

State-funded schools which, since 1997, have either been wholly selective by ability (i.e. grammar schools) or which, since the same date, have been partially selective by aptitude and/or ability. These schools can be either academy schools or maintained schools.

### **Statistical neighbours**

The National Foundation for Educational Research was commissioned in 2007 by the Department to identify and group similar LAs in terms of the socio-economic characteristics. Each local authority is assigned 10 such neighbours:

[The development of the children's services statistical neighbour benchmarking model: final report \(nfer.ac.uk\)](#)

**3-tier education system**

Refers to those structures of schooling, which exist in some parts of England, where pupils are taught in three distinct school types – first schools (children between the ages of 5 and 9), middle schools (children between the ages of 9 and 12 or 13) and upper schools (children between the ages of 13 or 14 to 16, or 18 if the school includes Years 12 and 13).

## Annex B: Case Studies

### Case study 1

Local authority A is geographically small (7 by 3 miles) and is unitary, currently operating a local authority-wide primary PA consisting of 30 primary schools. The authority is proposing to create 10 primary PAs, including four single school PAs:

Current number of PAs: 1

Proposed PA structure: 10

- 4 PAs each consisting of 1 school
- 5 PAs each consisting of 4 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 6 schools

Reasons why proposals are unreasonable:

The schools proposed for single school PAs are not isolated, they are within a 2-mile radius of neighbouring schools. The department would reject these proposals as there is no justification for these single school PAs. With the exception of the PA consisting of 6 schools, the proposed PAs fall below the minimum number of schools recommended for a primary PA.

Approved number of PAs: 4

- 3 PAs each consisting of 8 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 6 schools

### Case study 2

Local authority B is non-unitary and operates a mix of two-tier and three-tier education systems across the local authority area. There are 40 secondary schools in total - 25 secondary schools, 10 middle-deemed secondary schools and 5 upper schools. The authority currently operates four secondary PAs but has identified that the need for places is not being correctly reported due to the way schools have been grouped together in secondary PAs. The authority has submitted proposals to increase the number of secondary PAs outlined below:

Current number of PAs: 4

Proposed PA structure: 8

- 1 PA consisting of 5 upper schools
- 1 PA consisting of 5 middle schools
- 5 PAs each consisting of 5 secondary schools

Reasons why proposals are unreasonable:

Grouping middle-deemed secondary schools together in a PA, and separate from the upper schools, could result in an incorrect picture of the need for places being reported in the future. Future age range changes to schools could result in pupil forecasts being submitted (for the SCAP collection) in PAs where there is currently no existing school capacity in that year group.

To avoid an inaccurate account of the need for places being reported, upper schools should be located in the same PA as the feeder middle schools.

Approved number of PAs: 8

- 1 PA consisting of 1 upper school and 2 middle schools
- 5 PAs each consisting of 5 secondary schools
- 2 PAs each consisting of 2 upper schools and 4 middle schools

### Case study 3

Local authority C is unitary and currently operates 1 secondary PA consisting of 19 widely-spread schools. For the annual SCAP collection, the local authority has previously submitted local authority-wide secondary pupil forecasts and school capacity data, despite it not being reasonable to expect pupils to travel across this area. In doing so, there is a danger that this is masking the expected pressure for secondary places that may be present in specific areas within the local authority. Internal local authority analysis has highlighted a need for additional places at Year 7 (due to larger primary pupil cohorts) which are currently being masked due to the current single secondary PA structure. The local authority has submitted proposals to re-structure the PA in line with the 3 geographic clusters used for partnership working within the authority. The local authority is proposing to have 3 PAs as outlined below:

Current number of PAs: 1

Proposed PA structure: 3

- 1 PA consisting of 7 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 9 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 3 schools

Reasons why proposals are reasonable:

Local authority C provided very clear information (including heat maps showing pupil travel patterns) setting out the case for change, which included a map of the local authority carved into the current 3 secondary PAs showing the location of the secondary schools. Local authority analysis using the proposed 3 PAs highlights the actual place pressure for both Year 7 and pupil numbers on roll in excess of capacity – which is currently being masked under the current LA-wide secondary PA.

The department is satisfied from the supporting documentation that a local authority wide secondary PA is unsuitable for planning purposes and reporting an inaccurate account of increasing pressure.

Approved number of PAs: 3

- 1 PA consisting of 7 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 9 schools
- 1 PA consisting of 3 schools

#### Case study 4

Local authority D is non-unitary and currently operates five secondary pupil planning areas in which there are 30 secondary schools. The local authority has submitted proposals to create an additional single school, authority-wide secondary PA overlaid on all the other PAs.

The new PA is intended to accommodate a UTC only, which opened at the start of the 2021/22 academic year and will operate year groups 7 to 13. The authority has advised that although the school is located in a town, they feel it is inappropriate to include it in an existing PA as the school will serve a very wide catchment area.

Current number of PAs: 5

Proposed PA structure: 6

- 1 PA – consisting of 3 schools
- 1 PA - consisting of 1 UTC
- 1 PA – consisting of 6 secondary schools
- 3 PAs – each consisting of 7 secondary schools

Reasons why proposals are unreasonable:

It is unreasonable to create a single school PA for the UTC when the local authority has six secondary schools within the town and can offer places due to the short travelling distance between schools. Although the authority has advised that the UTC is intended to serve a very wide geographical region, a single school PA could potentially report a pressure for places where alternative places are available in neighbouring PAs over which the proposed PA would be laid.

The department would not approve this structure for the reasons stated above. To avoid an inaccurate picture of the need for places being reported, the UTC should be located in the same PA as other secondary schools in that area.

Approved number of PAs: 5

- 1 PA – consisting of 3 schools
- 1 PA – consisting of 6 secondary schools and UTC
- 3 PAs – each consisting of 7 secondary schools

## Case study 5

Local authority E is unitary and currently operates six primary PAs consisting of 50 primary schools divided between the areas. The authority has advised that two new towns are in the process of being built and it has submitted proposals to re-structure and increase the number of PAs as follows:

Current number of PAs: 6

Proposed PA structure: 8

- 2 PAs – each consisting of 10 schools
- 1 PA - consisting of 9 schools
- 1 PA – consisting of 8 schools
- 2 PAs – each consisting of 6 schools
- 1 PA – consisting of 1 existing school and 1 new school not yet built
- 1 PA – consisting of 1 new school not yet built

Reasons why proposals are unreasonable:

Local authority has requested creating PAs due to new housing developments. One of the proposed PAs does not have existing school capacity due to the planned new school provision not due to open until the following academic year. For the purposes of SCAP, the authority will report pupil forecasts for the area but there is no corresponding school capacity to offset them against.

The department will reject these proposals as one of the proposed PAs does not have existing school capacity. The local authority should retain the existing primary school in its current PA until the new schools are open or adjust proposals to ensure all proposed PAs have existing school capacity. The authority should include the pupil forecasts generated from the new housing developments in the forecasts for the existing PA or adjusted structure

Approved number of PAs: 6

- 2 PAs – each consisting of 10 schools
- 2 PAs - consisting of 9 schools
- 2 PAs – each consisting of 6 schools

## Case study 6

Local authority F is non-unitary and currently operates 52 primary PAs. The local authority is proposing to increase the number of primary areas to 53 by dividing 1 existing PA into 2 – East and West. The current PA has 21 schools and the new structure will consist of 12 schools in the East and 9 in the West area.

Current number of PAs: 52

Proposed PA structure: 53

- 1 PA – consisting of 12 schools
- 1 PA – consisting of 9 schools
- 51 PAs which will remain the same

Reasons why proposals are reasonable:

Local authority G provided very clear information setting out the case for change. The proposals are due to a large number of schools in the existing PA that greatly exceed a 2 mile travel distance from one side of the PA to the other. The current structure makes it difficult to identify whether or not there is a need for additional places in the area.

The local authority provided illustrative maps which clearly demonstrates a clear segregation of pupil movement between the proposed areas. The department is satisfied from the supporting documentation that the current structure of the PA is unsuitable for planning purposes and reporting an inaccurate account of increasing pressure on school places.

Approved number of PAs: 53

- 1 PA – consisting of 12 schools
- 1 PA – consisting of 9 schools
- 51 PAs which will remain the same



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## Appeal Decision

Inquiry Held on 22-25 and 30-31 March and 1 and 20-21 April 2021

Site visit made on 19 March 2021

**by P W Clark MA(Oxon) MA(TRP) MRTPI MCMJ**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/G1630/W/20/3257625**

**Land off the A38, Coombe Hill, Gloucestershire**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for outline planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Bovis Homes Limited & Robert Hitchins Limited against Tewkesbury Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 20/00140/OUT, is dated 11 February 2020.
  - The development proposed was originally described as residential development (up to 150 dwellings), associated infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space and landscaping. Construction of a new vehicular and pedestrian access from the A38 and pedestrian access to the A4019.
- 

### Decision

The appeal is allowed and outline planning permission is granted for residential development (up to 95 dwellings), associated infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space, landscaping and construction of a new vehicular and pedestrian access from the A38 and pedestrian access to the A4019 on Land off the A38, Coombe Hill, Gloucestershire in accordance with the terms of the application as amended, Ref 20/00140/OUT, dated 11 February 2020, subject to the twelve conditions appended to this decision.

### Procedural matters

Some time before the opening of the Inquiry, the appellant sought to amend the description of the scheme. The description would change, replacing "up to 150 dwellings" by "up to 95 dwellings". The appellant advertised the intention for an appropriate period as widely as the Council had itself consulted on the original application. For that reason, and because the descriptive quantity "up to 95" is contained within the descriptive quantity "up to 150", I am satisfied that nobody would be prejudiced by considering the appeal on the basis of the revised description of development, which is what I have done.

The application form states that the application was made in outline with all matters reserved. At the opening of the Inquiry, the appellant advised that the way the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (the Order) defined access had caused confusion and had led to an inaccurate completion of the application form. In the Order, the definition of "access", in relation to reserved matters, means the accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network. The appellant intended that most details of access to and within the site

should remain as reserved matters but, as part of the submitted Transport Assessment, had included a detailed drawing of one pedestrian and vehicular access from the A38 into the site and had intended that that access should be given detailed consideration at this stage.

The Borough Council had not understood that to be the intention of the appellant but acknowledged that, had it correctly inferred the appellant's intention, it would have relied on the advice of the highway authority in coming to a conclusion on the acceptability of the details. The highway authority, which had been consulted by the Borough Council on the application, acknowledged that it had treated the application as though detailed consideration was to be given to the access in question and had given that detailed consideration and advised that the access would be acceptable. From third party comments on file, it appears that members of the public had also considered the application to be made in the way understood by the highway authority and intended by the appellant and have commented accordingly. I therefore take the view that nobody would be prejudiced if I now do the same.

No request for an EIA screening opinion was made, nor was any given. Instead the appellant elected to submit an Environmental Statement following a Scoping Opinion sought and issued. The Environmental Statement includes two parameter plans (subsequently amended in accordance with the revised description of development) covering Land Use, Access and Movement and Building Heights. In accordance with decisions of the courts<sup>1</sup> these parameter plans must be applied by condition, if permission is granted, so as to establish an envelope within which the detailed design and discharge of reserved matters can proceed, irrespective of whether or not they would be otherwise required to make the development acceptable (condition 4).

The appeal has therefore been considered as an application made in outline with all matters reserved except for details of one access onto the A38. Other details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale remain to be considered at a later date (condition 1).

An informal, unaccompanied site visit was made before the Inquiry opened. By agreement at the Inquiry, no further accompanied visit was made.

### **Main Issues**

At the time the appeal was made, seven issues could be identified;

- Whether the appeal site would be an appropriate location for new residential development of the scale proposed.
- The effect of the quantity of development proposed on the character and appearance of the area.
- The effects of the proposal on the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI and the Severn Estuary SPA (including the adequacy of on-site mitigation and ecological enhancements).
- The effects of the proposal on flooding on and off the site.
- The effects of the proposal on the supply of market and affordable housing.
- The effects of the proposal on the demand for, and provision of, Schools.

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<sup>1</sup> R v Rochdale MBC ex parte Tew and Others [1999] 3 PLR 74 and R v Rochdale MBC ex parte Milne [2000] EHCW 650 (Admin)

- The effects of the proposal on the demand for, and supply of, open space, outdoor recreation, sports and community facilities.

An eighth matter, viability, was identified as a possible issue consequent on the sixth and seventh issues but, in the event, was a matter of little dispute at the Inquiry.

By the time the Inquiry had opened, agreement had been reached on the fourth issue (the effects of the proposal on flooding on and off the site) and a believed betterment of the existing position at the site is provided for within a submitted Unilateral Undertaking. A degree of agreement had also been reached on the provision of affordable housing, enshrined in a Unilateral Undertaking and so debate on the fifth issue during the Inquiry concentrated on the degree to which the Council fell short of a five-year housing land supply.

Two planning obligations by way of Unilateral Undertakings were submitted during consideration of the appeal. Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Regulations (CIL) sets out three tests with which planning obligations must comply. Subject to my certifying compliance with the CIL regulations, the undertakings would provide the County Council with index-linked financial contributions of;

- £32,000 to enlarge the culvert under the A4019 road,
- £18,620 for library facilities in Tewkesbury,
- £107,050 for pre-school facilities,
- £397,980 for primary school provision,
- £224,069 for secondary school provision,
- £38,657 for sixth form provision and
- for the authority's technical charges and monitoring fees.

The undertakings would provide the Borough Council with;

- 40% of the number of dwellings as affordable housing, split 60:40 between affordable renting and shared ownership,
- £73 per dwelling for the provision of recycling and waste bins,
- arrangements for the maintenance of public open space,
- £100,000 for the benefit of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows Reserve,
- £4,750 for the preparation and distribution of Household Information Packs and
- £54 per dwelling for one year's membership of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust for each dwelling,
- together with the authority's technical charges and monitoring fees.

Nevertheless, other than the provisions for dealing with flooding, the Unilateral Undertakings do not resolve any other issues which were the subject of dispute during the Inquiry. I report upon compliance with the CIL regulations as I consider each issue in turn.

## Reasons

### *Appropriate location*

At present, Coombe Hill is a tiny hamlet of about 50 dwellings (some say 42, others say more). Yet it benefits from surprisingly frequent<sup>2</sup> bus services in three directions to Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, all reached within about fifteen minutes. Within the hamlet is a public house and a petrol filling station with convenience store. A well-provisioned farm shop and café is on the northern edge of the hamlet. A little way outside the hamlet is the Knightsbridge Business Centre with further retail facilities amongst other employment uses.

Hardly surprising then that the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS), adopted in December 2017, identified Coombe Hill as a Service Village in its Settlement hierarchy (table SP2c). Policy SP2, clauses (4) and (5), assert that at least 7,445 dwellings will be provided to meet the needs of Tewkesbury Borough through existing commitments, development at Tewkesbury Town itself and smaller-scale development at Rural Service Centres and Service Villages and that Service Villages will accommodate in the order of 880 new homes, to be allocated through the Tewkesbury Borough Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. According to JCS policy SP2 (6), policy SD10, referred to in the Borough Council's putative reasons for refusal, would apply in the remainder of the rural area but it does not say "only" so I deduce that JCS policy SD10 is also intended to apply within the Service Villages, as indeed, its internal content implies.

The Housing Background Paper to the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2011 to 2031 disaggregated the 880 new homes to be provided between the twelve defined service villages to suggest an allocation of 22 dwellings at Coombe Hill. But, in addition to that "top down" approach, it also recommended that a "bottom up" process of considering the availability of sustainable sites at each settlement will also be a factor in determining a distribution of development. Two such sites were identified at Coombe Hill. One is a site on the west side of the A38, next to The Swan public house. That has since received planning permission for 25 dwellings and was under construction at the time of my site visit. The other is the appeal site.

The Housing Background Paper identified the capacity of the appeal site as between 50 and 80 dwellings. Paragraph 11.12 of the Housing Background Paper suggested that capacity be limited to 50 with significant opportunities for landscaping and open space. That recommendation was carried forward into the emerging Local Plan submitted for examination in May 2020 in which policy RES1 allocates site COO1 (the appeal site) for 50 dwellings.

But the policy includes a note to the effect that all site capacities are an approximation and that detailed design proposals may indicate that more or fewer dwellings can be accommodated on a site. Moreover, notwithstanding the provision of emerging policy COO1 that the density of development be relatively low, adopted policy SD10(6) requires residential development to seek to achieve the maximum density compatible with good design, the protection of heritage assets, local amenity, the character and quality of the local environment and the safety and convenience of the local and strategic road network.

There are several representations to the effect that the proposal would be disproportionate to the size and function of the existing village (a criterion in JCS policy SP2(5)) but it is clear from the Borough Council's Housing Background Paper and from emerging policy COO1 that the two sites being allocated in Coombe Hill are intended to create a new character for the settlement. Charming though the

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<sup>2</sup> Even when reduced during the pandemic occurring at the time of my site visit

hamlet is at present, I do not demur from the analysis of the Housing Background Paper that the village lacks a cohesive form and does not have a well-defined village character.

The aim of the settlement boundary (which would result from the two allocations) is to create a well-defined nucleated village and establish a sense of place, rather than exacerbating the already dispersed nature of the village. The combined figure of 75 additional dwellings proposed in the emerging plan would be transformative in the context of an existing settlement of about 50 dwellings. The addition of a further 45 dwellings would break no greater threshold of character change than transformative.

The Council has already resolved to grant planning permission for up to 40 dwellings on a small part of the site (described as Part Parcel 0120). In an e-mail of 19 March 2018 an officer of the Council, having discussed that earlier application with senior colleagues, invited a single application for the whole site in line with the Borough Plan (Housing Background Paper) consideration of 80 dwellings, so as to allow for a village focus and a sense of place which that previous scheme did not deliver. I concur with that view.

Nothing in the evidence before me suggests that the figure of 50 dwellings proposed in the emerging Local Plan is arrived at following a feasibility study or detailed analysis of the criteria itemised by JCS policy SD10(6). Rather, the evidence points to the selection of a nominal or even arbitrary figure to be given greater and more refined consideration in a pragmatic way during the consideration of a planning application.

During the consideration of this appeal, the emerging Leigh Neighbourhood Plan was passing through its regulation 14 consultation stage. Shortly after the conclusion of the Inquiry, it was approved for submission in accordance with regulation 15. Although the emerging NP is a material consideration, it remains at an early stage in the plan making process. No party sought to place any particular reliance on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan as part of its case in this appeal. In any event, the emerging Neighbourhood Plan anticipates that the site will be allocated for development through the emerging Tewkesbury Local Plan and so I have taken the latter plan into greater account in determining this appeal.

The appellant concedes that there is a nominal conflict between the proposal and both JCS policies SP2 and SD10 because no adopted plan has ever been subsequently produced designating non-strategic sites for development in Tewkesbury. Nevertheless, I conclude that the appeal site would be an appropriate location for new residential development in accordance with JCS policy SP2 and that the scale should be determined pragmatically by a consideration of the criteria set out in that policy and in JCS policy SD10(6). These are largely covered by the other issues in this appeal, to which I now turn.

#### *Character and appearance*

The Council's case, in relation to this issue, was more a criticism of the supporting Design and Access Statement (DAS), than of the development proposed. Because the proposal is for a number of dwellinghouses greater than ten, it is defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015 (the DMPO) as a major development.

Article 9 of the DMPO requires an application for major development to be accompanied by a DAS. A DAS is intended;

- to explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development,

- to demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that context into account,
- to explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account,
- to state what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation and
- to explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

The application was made in outline as a proposal in principle only. All matters, namely access (except for one pedestrian and vehicular access to the site), appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved, to be submitted later, in the event that outline permission is granted. The Borough Council has powers, under Article 5(2) of the DMPO, to require details to be submitted of any reserved matter, if it considered that the application could not be determined without them. The Borough Council made no such requirement in the present case. The application was validated without details of any reserved matter other than for the main vehicular access.

The submitted DAS does not include a design code but there is no requirement in the DMPO, or in adopted JCS policy or emerging Local Plan policy that it should. JCS policy SD4 states that a masterplan and design brief may be required but clause (2) of the policy makes it clear that they are optional and the application was registered and validated without a design brief being required. Nor is the submitted DAS specific to a scheme for a fixed number of dwellings but that is hardly surprising as the number of dwellings is not fixed; as submitted the application was for any number up to 150 dwellings and as amended, it is for any number up to 95 dwellings. Neither of those points impair its validity.

Not all outline applications have all matters reserved but, where a matter is reserved, a DAS can do little more in relation to that matter than explain the obvious, namely that the design principles and concepts to be applied to the development have yet to be formulated and will be explained at reserved matters stage. Nevertheless, the submitted DAS does in fact go further than that.

A comparison with the requirements of the DMPO shows that an extensive section 2 in the DAS demonstrates the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development will take that context into account. In section 4 it sets out a series of Design Principles and Design Proposals, explaining at paragraphs 4.14, 4.19 and 4.20 the policy adopted as to access, at paragraphs 4.15 and 4.20 how policies relating to access in the government's Manual for Streets (rather than the JCS) have been taken into account and at paragraph 4.17, summarising the consultation which had taken place with the highway authority and its outcome. I therefore find that the DAS complies with the requirements of the DMPO.

Turning from an appraisal of the DAS to an appraisal of the development proposed; the emerging local plan policy COO1 sets requirements, compliance with most of which could only be demonstrated at reserved matters stage. The master plan which accompanies the appeal is illustrative only. Nevertheless, in the next three paragraphs, I consider its provisions in relation to the requirements of emerging policy COO1.

The masterplan does demonstrate a continuity of active frontages along the A38 north of the petrol filling station. If followed in the reserved matters application(s), these, in conjunction with the development now under way on the opposite side of the road, would link several of the currently dispersed elements of the settlement to help create a nucleated village in the way described in the Housing Background Paper.

As recorded in a later section of this decision, the quantity of open space proposed (which is required to be provided by paragraphs 1.26, 5.2 and Schedule 3 of the Unilateral Undertaking to Tewkesbury Borough Council) would be sufficient to provide for use by the wider community. The Borough Council's contribution to Inquiry Document 17 confirms that the open space could contribute to the wider Green Infrastructure (GI) network envisaged in the supporting text to JCS policy INF3. There is no dispute that biodiversity net gains on the site itself would be delivered (the dispute, which I consider below, relates to residents' recreational effects on biodiversity off site, in relation to the Severn Estuary SPA). A later section of this decision concludes that mitigation of recreational pressure on the SSSI would be achieved. The design requirements for enhanced pedestrian connectivity can also be required by conditions (6(ii)) and (10(i)).

The illustrative masterplan indicates that public open space would address the A4019 frontage and the prominent corner location at the junction of the A38 and A4019 and so demonstrates how a reserved matters application could feature a landmark (albeit not a building) as envisaged by the emerging policy. It shows landscaped open space surrounding the development which demonstrates how the detailed layout could be landscape-led. At about 20 dwellings per hectare, the density of development would be relatively low.

Insofar as the Council makes any substantive comment on the character of the development proposed, the Council's urban design officer observes that the illustrative layout shows almost every dwelling to be a terraced property and expresses doubt that that would be in keeping with the character of the area. It is true that terraced properties do not dominate the existing character of the area, although there are some at the Wharf and a pair of semi-detached properties to the north of the graveyard and former chapel. Nevertheless, I note that Leigh Parish Council, in its representations to policy COO1 of the emerging local plan comments that a village survey recorded the need for smaller 2 and 3 bedroomed accommodation and for social housing. It follows that, if the illustrative layout were to be followed in the reserved matters applications then it is likely that an acknowledged deficiency in the character of the settlement would be made good. The Council's evidence to the Inquiry commented on the storey heights implied by the parameters plan, commenting that although there are examples of 2.5 storey dwellings in the settlement, these are few and far between. But in fact, section 2 of the appellant's DAS shows several examples of taller buildings, including Walton Grange to the north of the site and the former police station at the crossroads. The appellant's Response to the Urban Design Officer's response shows several three storey buildings to be present in Coombe Hill. The Council's evidence also commented on the parameter plan's implication of cut and fill to provide a level building platform but on my site visit, I observed that this was characteristic of existing buildings to the east of the A38 in the hamlet.

Without prejudice to consideration of detailed reserved matters applications, I conclude that there is nothing in the material before me to demonstrate that the effect of the quantity of development proposed on the character and appearance of the area need be anything other than acceptable. The proposal would therefore comply with those elements of JCS policy SD10(6) which require compatibility with good design and with the character and quality of the local environment.

*Ecology (the SSSI and the SPA)*

There are two parts to this issue. One is concerned with the possible adverse effects of the development proposed upon the integrity and conservation objectives of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site (the SPA) either through hydrological effects in functionally linked watercourses on migratory fish species or through recreational effects on birds using Functionally Linked Land (FLL) in the vicinity of Coombe Hill (which may, or may not, be coterminous with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows Reserve). The second is concerned with possible adverse effects upon the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI and on Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows Reserve in general. I deal with the SPA concern first.

The Habitats Regulations 2017 (as revised) require that before any planning permission is given for a project which is likely to have a significant effect on what is known as a European site (in this case the Severn Estuary SPA), an appropriate assessment must be made of the implications of the project in view of the SPA's conservation objectives and that I must ascertain that the project would not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. I can take account of conditions which may be imposed. This is a two-stage process; first of all establishing a likely significant effect and then secondly making an appropriate assessment of that likely significant effect.

The possible effects on fish may be swiftly disposed of. No party contests the findings of the appellant's submitted Environmental Statement that best practice methods and effective engineering solutions to ensure contaminated run-off is prevented from entering the local watercourses would ensure a minor beneficial effect. Natural England, which is the government's adviser on these matters, agrees that adverse effects on water quality in functionally linked watercourses including the Rivers Chelt and Severn are unlikely to occur provided that the proposed sustainable drainage measures are secured by condition. I have no reason to disagree. Condition (8(iv)) requires details of drainage to be submitted, at which point the Council can ensure that they include the matters described in paragraph 3.7 of the Ecology Statement of Common Ground.

For birds, the SPA's 1993 citation included six elements or qualifying features;

- An internationally important wintering population of Bewick's swan
- A wetland of international importance supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl (wildfowl and waders)
- Supporting in winter internationally important numbers of five species of migratory waterfowl; European white-fronted goose, shelduck, gadwall, dunlin and redshank
- A nationally important wintering population of ten species; wigeon, teal, pintail, pochard, tufted duck, ringed plover, grey plover, curlew, whimbrel and spotted redshank
- During passage periods, nationally important numbers of ringed plover, dunlin, whimbrel and redshank
- A nationally important breeding population of lesser black-backed gulls

A Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for the SPA dated December 2015 includes entries for Bewick's swan, European white-fronted goose, shelduck, gadwall, dunlin and redshank and for a waterfowl assemblage. Advice given by the Countryside Council for Wales and Natural England in June 2009 lists the internationally important assemblage of waterfowl as Bewick's swan, European white-fronted

goose, dunlin, redshank, shelduck, gadwall, wigeon, teal, pintail, pochard, tufted duck, ringed plover, grey plover, curlew and whimbrel.

The concern that the development proposed on the appeal site might be likely to have a significant effect on the SPA arises from the concept that the residents of the proposed development would use the surrounding countryside for recreational walking. During that recreational activity, particularly if dog walking, they could disturb the birds which represent qualifying features of the SPA when they also use the surrounding countryside in a way which identifies it as Functionally Linked Land (FLL). That could prejudice both the extent and distribution of the habitats of the SPA birds and also their population, the maintenance of which are among the site conservation objectives for the SPA.

The concept of Functionally Linked Land is endorsed in paragraph 27 of *RSPB v SofSCLG* [2014] EWHC 1523 (Admin), 2014 WL 1976410; "while no particular legal status attaches to FLL, the fact that land is functionally linked to protected land means that the indirectly adverse effects on a protected site, produced by effects on FLL, are scrutinised in the same legal framework just as are the direct effects of acts carried out on the protected site itself." FLL is defined in a 2016 report NECR207 commissioned by Natural England; *Functional linkage: How areas that are functionally linked to European sites have been considered when they may be affected by plans and projects - a review of authoritative decisions*. It refers to the role or function that land beyond the boundary of the SPA might fulfil in terms of supporting the population for which the SPA was designated.

FLL does not include all land which the designated species use; "Sometimes, the mobility of qualifying species is considerable and may extend so far from the key habitat that forms the SAC or SPA that it would be entirely impractical to attempt to designate or classify all of the land or sea that may conceivably be used by the species." Instead, the specific birds which form the population using the SPA have to use the other land in question for it to be identified as functionally linked. Moreover, there is an additional requirement for land to be identified as functionally linked. "In practice, therefore...supporting habitat in areas beyond the boundary of a SAC or SPA which are connected with or "functionally linked" to the life and reproduction of a population for which a site has been designated or classified should be taken into account in a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)." I take this to mean that a simple demonstration that land is used by birds of the same species as listed in the SPA designation would not justify the identification of FLL; what is needed is a demonstration not only that the land is used by the same individual birds as use the SPA land but also that they use it in a way which is necessary to their life and reproduction.

For this reason, explored further in the following paragraphs, I am not entirely convinced by the conclusions of the report to Natural England by Link Ecology dated September 2020, entitled "Identification of Land with Proven or Possible Functional Linkages with the Severn Estuary SPA Phase 5 (Gloucestershire and Worcestershire)", (the FLL report) (although endorsed by the advice of Natural England). This states that that ten sites (including land at Coombe Hill) "appear to be or have been Functionally Linked to the Severn Estuary SPA as shown by regular or intermittent movements of individual birds and for identifiable flocks in the past ten years."

The report itself immediately qualifies its finding in respect of Coombe Hill and two other sites by stating "The Functional Linkage between this complex of sites and the SPA must therefore be considered, on the basis of evidence to date, to be diminishing for two of the main species and is at best unproven for most other SPA Interest Species that occur within them". In addition to that, the reason for my scepticism is that, with the exception of Black-tailed godwit (which is not a listed

SPA species) and curlew (which is a listed SPA species as part of the important assemblage of waterfowl) the conclusions are mostly based upon what appear to be opportunistic uses of the ten sites by SPA birds on occasions when the sites' condition presents an optional alternative to use of the SPA itself, rather than usage essential for the SPA species to complete its life cycle in circumstances where the SPA land itself cannot offer that usage.

There are analogies in human life where a location (be it a park, restaurant or music venue) is famed for attracting large numbers of users. The fact that some individuals amongst those users may also attend other locations at other times does not prove that those other venues are functionally linked to the main venue; the other locations are simply used as a matter of choice in parallel with the use of the famed attraction; their use is not essential for the desired experience.

But, for the Black-tailed godwits, fattening themselves up for their migration, for which the SPA does not provide enough resource, I accept that the land identified in map 20 of the FLL report, including land in the vicinity of Coombe Hill, does represent FLL although Black-tailed godwits are not an SPA listed species.

Likewise, for the curlews, needing to breed away from their winter residence on the SPA I accept that the land identified in map 19 of the FLL report, including land in the vicinity of Coombe Hill, represents FLL in that land suitable for breeding is essential for the species to complete its life cycle and thus to maintain its population within the SPA. Curlew as a species is known to be sensitive to disturbance and as a ground-nesting species, its breeding success is known to be sensitive to the presence of dogs. For that reason, I accept that there may be a likely significant effect on the SPA from the development proposed and that an appropriate assessment must be made.

#### *Appropriate assessment*

The Conservation Objectives for the Severn Estuary SPA are recently restated by Natural England in a document published in February 2019. They are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and to ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

The SPA is also a European marine site for which objectives were stated by Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales in 2009. For the internationally important assemblage of waterfowl these are to maintain the waterfowl assemblage and its supporting habitats (Intertidal mudflats and sandflats, Saltmarsh and Hard substrate habitats (rocky shores)) in favourable condition, as defined below:

The interest feature waterfowl assemblage will be considered to be in favourable condition when, subject to natural processes (the dynamic physical process within the estuary), each of the following conditions are met:

- (i) the 5 year peak mean population size for the waterfowl assemblage is no less than 68,026 individuals (ie the 5 year peak mean between 1988/9 - 1992/3);
- (ii) the extent of saltmarsh and their associated strandlines is maintained;
- (iii) the extent of intertidal mudflats and sandflats is maintained;
- (iv) the extent of hard substrate habitats is maintained;
- (v) extent of vegetation of <10cm throughout the saltmarsh is maintained;
- (vi) the abundance and macroscale distribution of suitable invertebrates in intertidal mudflats and sandflats is maintained;
- (vii) the abundance and macroscale distribution of suitable invertebrates in hard substrate habitats is maintained;
- (viii) greater than 25% cover of suitable soft leaved herbs and grasses during the winter on saltmarsh areas is maintained;
- (ix) unrestricted bird sightlines of >500m at feeding and roosting sites are maintained;
- (x) waterfowl aggregations at feeding or roosting sites are not subject to significant disturbance.

Of these conditions, item (i), the 5-year mean population size for the waterfowl assemblage is the condition at risk from the recreational activity expected from the appeal site. Items (ix) and (x) are relevant to a degree. Restricted bird sightlines may lead to disturbance prejudicial to successful breeding in the vicinity of Coombe Hill and so might affect the maintenance or restoration of the species' population size on the SPA. Nevertheless, the appeal development would make no difference to the extent of bird sightlines at feeding and roosting sites in the vicinity of Coombe Hill, because these are reported to be near the appeal site, not on it. The issue is whether the residents of the development would cause disturbance with the sightlines as they exist now at Coombe Hill.

The population size for the waterfowl assemblage as a whole is large. In the five-year period 1988/9-1992/3 the average peak count was 68,026 (17,502 wildfowl and 50,524 waders). In the 2015 Natura 2000 Standard Data Form, it was reported as 84,317 for the five-year period 1991/2-1995/6. In an SPA review carried out in 2001 it is stated that the area regularly supports 93,986 individual waterfowl in winter.

In the 1993 SPA citation 3,096 were reported as curlew. That could be interpreted to mean that the loss of the entire curlew component of the SPA's assemblage would mean an effect of 4.5% on the waterfowl assemblage as a whole but the point of an assemblage is that it comprises a variety of species; the loss of a component of that assemblage would reduce that variety and so could be disproportionately harmful. For that reason, I focus on the population size of the curlew alone in this assessment, rather than on the size of the assemblage overall. All parties accept the FLL report as an authoritative study of the relationship between birds using the SPA and those using various sites in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. The FLL report records that curlew has experienced a major decrease in numbers in the last twenty or more years across northwest Europe. Karen Colebourne writes in her evidence that between 1995 and 2008 the curlew population in the UK declined by 42%.

In contrast, the five-year mean peak for curlew on the Severn estuary had increased from 3096 in 1993 to 3398 by 2014/5-2018/9. Within that five-year mean there has been substantial fluctuation; 3546 in 2013/4, 3696 in 2014/5, peaking at 4203 in 2015/6, reducing to 2998 in 2016/7, increasing to 3411 in 2017/8 and reducing to 2680 in 2018/9, so it is by no means clear that the population of curlew on the SPA is not being maintained or that it requires restoration or that it is not contributing to the conservation objectives of the SPA. Of these numbers, the FLL report records that some 30-35 pairs of curlew (i.e. 60-70 birds) regularly attempt to nest in traditional hay meadows along the entire Severn and Avon river system north of Gloucester (not just at Coombe Hill). Even if all the nesting birds were to come from the SPA, that would represent just about 2% of the numbers of curlew using the SPA. The vast majority breed elsewhere (Scotland, northern England, Wales, Northern Ireland, other parts of the English lowlands, the Netherlands, Lower Rhine, Finland, Sweden and Eastern Poland are all mentioned in the FLL report).

The area around Coombe Hill is important as a roost before and after the breeding season but appears to be less important for breeding. Coombe Hill is reported as a strongpoint for breeding curlews but it is only one of many sites (at least thirteen are named in paragraph 4.690 of the FLL report) sharing the 30-35 pairs identified as nesting in the Severn and Avon valleys, so numbers are small at each individual site and at Coombe Hill.

The FLL report names the hay meadows along the Avon from Tewkesbury to Eckington as the area with the highest number of breeding curlew. It notes that of the 30-35 pairs of curlew nesting in its study area, some 20 pairs nest in hay meadows along the Avon north of Tewkesbury and about 15 pairs nest along the Severn between Gloucester and Worcester (the area which includes Coombe Hill). Again, in contrast to the decline seen across northwest Europe, the FLL report notes that this population seems to have remained stable for the last 40 years. It speculates that this is because there has been little change in farming methods in the area.

No more than three pairs of curlew are reported to use the area around Coombe Hill for nesting (FLL report, paragraph 5.267). That represents less than 0.09% of the curlew using the SPA as part of its winter assemblage of waterfowl. That figure is well within what might be the expected range of annual natural variation and also within the likely range of accuracy of the enumeration methods for counting curlew.

Natural England advises (in section B3 of its report NECR207) that "the extent to which an effect might 'undermine the conservation objectives' where it occurs beyond the boundary of the European site will be influenced by the role or function that the area serves and its importance to the maintenance of the population for which the site has been designated, classified or listed" and (in section B1 of the same report) that "assessment will need to determine how critical the area may be to the population of the qualifying species and whether the area is necessary to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of the species." Even if all three of these pairs of birds were prevented from breeding at Coombe Hill as a result of disturbance caused by residents of the development proposed (as opposed to disturbance caused by pre-existing conditions), whether alone or in combination with other developments in the area, it would have almost no effect on the maintenance of the population for which the SPA has been designated and so there would be no practical effect on the integrity of the SPA or its conservation objectives, let alone any significant effect.

Moreover, even that figure of 0.09% exaggerates the effect which the development could have on the integrity of the SPA and its conservation objectives because

there is no evidence in the material before me that the curlews nesting at Coombe Hill are successful in breeding. Rather, the evidence points to the opposite. Paragraph 8.17 of Karen Colebourn's evidence on behalf of the Borough Council reiterates without contradiction the information given in the appellant's Information to Inform a Habitats Regulation Assessment; curlew nests were recorded within 35-150m of public footpaths around Coombe Hill in 2013 and 2016 but they did not breed successfully then, nor since. Paragraph 4.688 of the FLL report notes that productivity is low at all the Severn and Avon nesting sites because of habitat change, predation and early hay cutting. The three colour-marked birds which the FLL report notes as clearly demonstrating the links between the SPA and the Severn and Avon Vales, normally attempted to breed at Queenhill (outside the report's study area), Haslam Ham and Upham Meadow respectively, not Coombe Hill. One of the three birds surprised observers by moving from Upham Meadow to Coombe Hill in 2019 where it "attempted to breed, almost certainly unsuccessfully" (indicated by its early departure from the breeding area).

Existing issues of disturbance to birds in the area around Coombe Hill are noted in paragraphs 5.260 to 5.262 of the FLL report. The canal provides a convenient out and back walk popular with dog-walkers, facilitated by the provision of a car park intended to serve the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's reserve but generally available for other users of the unusually intense network of footpaths through the countryside in the vicinity. During my site visit I observed several parties arrive by car and set off with their dogs. I overheard one couple remark that as the canal path was very muddy they would instead let their dogs run in the adjacent fields. It is those adjacent fields, not necessarily within the GWT's reserve, that are used by the curlew during the breeding season as the appellant's plan ECO1 revision B, contained within its Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment, demonstrates. The FLL report also notes that frequent helicopter overflights are an additional source of disturbance.

For all the above reasons, I doubt that the area around Coombe Hill presently contributes as much to the integrity and objectives of the SPA through maintenance of the population of curlew on the SPA as would be implied by even the minimal numbers of curlew attempting to breed at Coombe Hill. Consequently, the adverse effects of the development proposed, either alone or in combination with other developments, would be even less significant than the minimal extent identified earlier. They would be reduced still further by the offer of alternative dog-walking facilities on site and by publicity for alternative circular walks confined to the east of the A38 and so not affecting curlew breeding areas.

But the objectives of the SPA are not just maintenance of populations of wintering waterfowl but also their restoration. Paragraphs 5.263, 5.264 and 8.3 of the FLL report suggest ways in which the area could be enhanced for waterfowl, including more scrapes, the creation of buffer zones, footpath diversion and/or screening, fencing and planting. The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has also made suggestions for the enhancement of its reserve, including a warden scheme, which would benefit the wider area, though it would be wrong to conflate the GWT's reserve with the wider area within which curlew seek to nest.

The burden of seeking to restore the contribution which the Coombe Hill area could make to restoring the integrity and objectives of the SPA does not fall to this appeal development alone. The responsibility lies in combination with other developments in the area whose residents are also likely to make visits to the area and so disturb wildfowl unless their presence is properly managed. But the sum of £100,000 which is offered through the Unilateral Undertaking meets all the requests which the GWT has made and so I conclude that it represents a proportionate contribution to be made from this development.

In concluding this appropriate assessment I take into account condition (10(vi)) and the unilateral undertaking to Tewkesbury Borough Council which would require open space provision on site offering an alternative dog-walking facility, a homeowners pack publicising alternative walking routes, and a financial contribution to the GWT. I find that the proposal would have no significant adverse effects upon the integrity and conservation objectives of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site (the SPA) through recreational effects on birds using Functionally Linked Land (FLL) in the vicinity of Coombe Hill. It would have a proportionate beneficial effect through its financial contribution to the management of visitors to the part of the area which is controlled by the GWT. It would therefore comply with JCS policy SD9 (2(i)) which requires European and National protected species to be safeguarded in accordance with the law.

### *The SSSI*

I turn now to the other element of this issue, namely the SSSI. The Coombe Hill Canal SSSI is designated for its nationally rare and scarce invertebrates and nationally scarce plants. The invertebrate interest centres on beetles but flies and a diverse fauna from other invertebrate groups are also present. Several nationally scarce plants such as golden dock, corky-fruited water-dropwort, greater dodder and true fox-sedge are listed in the citation. The citation also mentions that the SSSI is also locally important for its diverse breeding bird assemblage, particularly resident and migrant warblers and waders such as curlew and snipe. None of the material before me expresses any concern about the effects of the development proposed on the nationally rare and scarce invertebrates or on the nationally scarce plants. Paragraph 3.8 of the Ecology Statement of Common Ground asserts that impacts from the scheme are unlikely to give rise to a significant effect on the interest features for which the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI is currently notified. Only the effects on the locally important breeding bird assemblage is of concern.

What is known about the breeding bird assemblage in the area is derived from the authoritative FLL report referred to in an earlier section of this decision. But, care must be taken to recognise that the FLL report covers a much more extensive area than the GWT's Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows Reserve, which is in turn much more extensive than the SSSI and so, comments made in the FLL report do not necessarily apply with equal force to the GWT reserve or to the SSSI.

The FLL report notes that in spring the wet fields of riverside meadows traditionally provided nesting sites for waders notably lapwing, curlew, redshank and snipe. In relation to breeding birds at Coombe Hill, the report mentions mallard, shelduck, gadwall, tufted duck (a diving duck rather than a wader; one or two pairs), lapwing, redshank, oystercatcher and curlew, though the site only ranks of high importance in spring to gadwall and mallard and of moderate importance to shoveler, tufted duck, whimbrel and ruff. It notes that in overall terms the success of nesting attempts by all wader species in recent years has been very poor but also records that despite the declining numbers of birds involved, Coombe Hill remains one of the most important sites for breeding waders in the Severn Vale. The SSSI citation is for a breeding bird assemblage, which would occur in springtime. But the FLL report also notes that Coombe Hill has always been an important site for wintering waterbirds such as swans, geese, ducks and some waders like lapwing. Information about wintering birds may be gleaned from Table 1 of the appellant's submitted Information to Inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment which summarises the British Trust for Ornithology's Wetlands Bird Survey wintering bird data (also used in the FLL report) for the period 2013/4 – 2017/8. In order of frequency, the species recorded with a significant presence are

wigeon, teal, canada goose, greylag goose and pintail. None met nationally important threshold numbers. The FLL report also mentions shoveler and lapwings. It records the site's importance in winter as high for shoveler, gadwall, wigeon, mallard, pintail, teal and lapwing.

A third category of interest is transitory migratory birds. Notable at Coombe Hill are black-tailed godwit and whimbrel. The FLL report mentions other species in smaller numbers.

Not all birds are disturbed by human presence. Although the black-tailed godwit demonstrates a functional link with the SPA (though not an SPA designated species), it is not considered further in Karen Colebourne's evidence for the Borough Council because, as she writes in paragraph 9.4 of her proof, there is "evidence that this species may not be significantly affected if disturbed while feeding." Mallard are also notoriously tolerant of human presence.

In recent years, the GWT has deliberately enhanced the meadows for breeding, feeding and roosting wetland birds so as to be more compatible with human visitors, for whom it provides car parking, hides and information boards.

Paragraphs 8.18 and 8.19 of Karen Colebourne's evidence and paragraph 5.258, 5.259 and 5.261 of the FLL report describe the works. The northern meadows of the GWT's reserve have been acquired, a circular walk has been laid out and signposted from the canal towpath. Two viewing hides have been provided along with information boards and signage requesting dogs to be kept on leads. Ditches have been deepened to create a no-go area where birds are free from disturbance. Land is managed to cut hay late. The FLL report suggests further enhancements, such as a mechanism to retain water levels in the scrapes over summer.

These measures already taken by the GWT help to secure their reserve against the effects of disturbance which, as the FLL report notes, is a problem at Coombe Hill because of the number of footpaths and the popularity of the canal as an out and back walk for dogs. Earlier passages of this decision record my on-site observations of the effects of the GWT's car park in facilitating this activity.

A letter from the GWT to the Borough Council dated 14 December 2020 records that its membership recruiters who have been stationed at Coombe Hill when permissible during 2020 report 50 visitor groups a day in autumn, with the car park being full for most of the day during good weather. Visitors included a mix of demographics. Around one-third were dog walkers. They included locals as well as residents from Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham.

It is therefore clearly not the case that the Reserve is managed so as to exclude or even to deter visitors, with or without dogs, or to restrict them to locals only, or to accredited ornithologists. It is open to all, including dogwalkers, and that sets a context within which any potential impact of the development needs to be measured so that it can be managed and mitigated. Although the GWT's letter warns that it would reluctantly have to consider closing its reserve to the public in order to protect its biodiversity features if necessary, that clearly is not its intention. Rather, what is sought is adequate mitigation, including measures to divert recreational demand.

In order to establish the effects of the development, it is not necessary to have carried out a visitor survey of the existing use of the SSSI or the GWT's reserve. Knowledge of the patterns of usage of visitors to the reserve from the wider area in general and the distance they have travelled may well be of use to the GWT in deciding how to promote to the public and manage the reserve for the future. But that knowledge is not necessary in order to ascertain the likely recreational demand from residents of the appeal site and to judge how likely that recreational demand is to be met by facilities provided on the appeal site as opposed to on the GWT's reserve.

The information needed to assess the scheme is provided in paragraphs 4.29 and 4.30 of the appellants' Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment. This estimates that the development would generate between 23 and 46 dog walking trips per day. If all were to be walked on the GWT reserve (crossing the A38 road and descending and ascending a narrow, shared surface country lane to and from the Wharf) to the exclusion of all other options, then something approximating a doubling of dog walking on the reserve would ensue. In my view, that degree of use would be unlikely given the greater convenience of a dog walking route to be provided on site. On the other hand, I do accept that the dog walking route to be provided on the appeal site would be unlikely to draw existing users away from the GWT's reserve as it would be on the wrong side of the A38 for most existing residents of the hamlet.

The mitigation measures proposed would publicise alternative circular walks, at least one of which involves no crossing of any main road and gives fine, eastward views. The attractions and detractors of these alternatives are fairly stated in paragraph 10.23 of Karen Colebourne's proof, except that I did not find the footpath along the wide verge of the A38 in front of Walton Grange Farm to be narrow (though it is somewhat overgrown). Nor is the footway narrow alongside the A4019 from Knightsbridge.

In combination, I consider that the provision of the dog walking route on site as proposed, together with the publicity given to other alternative walking routes on the development's side of the A38 would go a considerable way towards dissuading residents of the development from walking their dogs on the GWT reserve.

Nevertheless, there would inevitably be some residual increase in use.

The GWT has put forward proposals to deal with this, in an e-mail of 4 January 2021, including setting up a volunteer warden scheme at a cost of £7,900 pa for five years and identifying some infrastructure changes that would better define public rights of way and restrict access to the most sensitive bird habitat at a cost of around £50,000, using volunteers and spreading the work over five years, all of which seem to me to be reasonable and likely to be effective. In its unilateral undertaking, the appellant has agreed to fund the GWT to a degree commensurate with the estimated costs of the measures which the GWT seeks to put in place. That all seems both necessary and reasonable and compliant with the CIL regulations.

Taking that into account, I conclude that the effects of the proposal on the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI would be acceptable. The proposal would comply with JCS policy SD9 (2(i)) which requires European and National protected species to be safeguarded in accordance with the law and with JCS policy SD9 (2(iv)) which encourages the creation, restoration and beneficial management of priority landscapes, habitats and populations of priority species, for example by securing improvements to Strategic Nature Areas as set out on the Gloucester Nature Map.

### *Flooding*

A few weeks before the opening of this Inquiry, the parties (in this instance, the appellants and the County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority) agreed a Statement of Common Ground on matters relating to Drainage and Flooding. Essentially, the site drains to a ditch on its east side, which in turn flows through a 300mm diameter culvert underneath the A4019. From time to time the limited capacity of the culvert causes water to back up the ditch, extend over adjoining land (including the lowest part of the site and an adjoining dwelling known as The Bellows) and flood over the A4019.

As the appeal proposal was applied for in outline, drainage details are not supplied. Condition (8(iv)) would require their submission. The appellant's Flood Risk

Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment Addendum have now convinced the Lead Local Flood Authority that it would be possible to design a drainage system with an attenuation pond unaffected by flood levels which would attenuate peak run-off from the development so as to be 20% less than in its undeveloped state. In consequence, flood levels would be at least 20mm lower than if the site were to remain undeveloped, even if no alterations were made to the culvert under the A4019.

As originally submitted, no improvement works or increasing capacity to the existing pipe under the A4019 was envisaged so as to ensure that flood risk downstream of the development would not be increased. But further study showed that enlargement of the culvert to reduce flooding at the Bellows and on the lowest part of the site still further would not increase downstream flooding because it would simply mean that peak flows of water in extreme events would flow through the culvert rather than over the road. The attenuation measures envisaged for the on-site drainage would reduce peak flows in any event and so reduce downstream flood risk slightly.

The provision of drainage details for subsequent approval can be required by condition (8(iv)). The unilateral agreement makes provision for a financial contribution towards the cost of enlarging the culvert. These arrangements appear to be both necessary and reasonable and would comply with the CIL regulations. With these arrangements in place I am satisfied that the effects of the proposal on flooding on and off the site would be beneficial. The proposal would comply with JCS policy INF2 which, amongst other matters, requires development proposals not to increase the level of risk to the safety of occupants of a site, the local community or the wider environment and, where possible, to contribute to a reduction in existing flood risk.

### *Housing*

There was a putative reason for refusal concerning the absence of a commitment to provide affordable housing in the proposal as submitted but that could have been resolved by a condition requiring the submission of a scheme of affordable housing had permission been granted. In the current appeal, a Unilateral Undertaking provides for 40% of the number of dwellings as affordable housing, split 60:40 between affordable renting and shared ownership. The undertaking would be necessary to ensure compliance with JCS policy SD12(1(ii)) which requires a minimum of 40% affordable housing. It complies with the CIL regulations and so I have taken it into account.

The Borough Council would have preferred the rented element to have comprised social renting rather than affordable renting based upon its Local Housing Needs Assessment of September 2020. But, although that shows a greater need for the former rather than the latter, it does not show that the latter is not needed. Consequently, the provisions of the Undertaking would still serve to satisfy local affordable housing needs.

The Borough Council also had concerns about accessibility standards applied to both market and affordable housing but JCS policies SD4(vi) and SD11(2(ii)) which require new development to provide access for all potential users, including people with disabilities, and for housing to be accessible and adaptable will continue to apply to any reserved matters application which may be made. There is nothing to suggest that the current outline application which is before me would contravene any of those policies.

The point at issue during this Inquiry does not arise from any putative reason for refusal but from a dispute about the significance of the benefit which would arise from the provision of housing. The government seeks to boost the supply of

housing, so any housing proposal must be regarded as providing a degree of benefit to set against any harm which the development may cause. The significance of the benefit is judged by reference to the Borough's housing need and its performance in meeting that need.

At its simplest, the provision of up to 95 dwellings would represent approximately 19% of the annual average housing requirement ascribed to Tewkesbury by the JCS, or nearly 4% of its averaged five-year requirement, or just under 1% of the total housing requirement for Tewkesbury for the plan period. At typical roll-out figures, the development would probably be developed over two years, so it would contribute about 10% of Tewkesbury's annual average requirement for each year of a two-year period, which in turn represents about 10% of the JCS plan period. In straightforward numerical terms, whichever way it is looked at, that is a significant contribution to the supply of housing in Tewkesbury and therefore a significant benefit.

The courts have held that greater significance should be given to the benefits of housing provision, in proportion to the size of shortfalls in housing supply. In this case, both parties are agreed that there is both a plan period shortfall of allocated sites and also that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing supply. In a statement of common ground on housing need and supply the parties agree that there was a plan period shortfall of 2455 homes on adoption of the JCS (25% of the requirement for Tewkesbury) which is currently a plan period shortfall of 1525 dwellings (15% of the requirement for Tewkesbury). Hopes of closing that gap through the emerging local plan and a review of the Joint Core Strategy can only be aspirational at the current time and depend in part on approval being given to the allocation and development of the current appeal site. For the purposes of this appeal there remains a substantial shortfall in the identified housing land supply for the plan period. This adds significantly to the significant benefit which has already been identified as accruing to the appeal proposal.

The parties differ over the size of the shortfall in the five-year housing land supply. The calculation of a five-year supply is made by reference to an averaging of the plan period requirement. But, that does not reflect a reality in which supply can fluctuate wildly year by year. Thus, the trajectory for Tewkesbury contained within paragraph 7.1.36 of the JCS predicted a cumulative shortfall in delivery for the first four years of the plan period. This shortfall would be erased by year five (thus demonstrating an anticipated 6.3-year supply, on adoption, as stated in paragraph 7.1.19). Subsequently, there would be a considerable cumulative surplus in supply lasting until 2024-25. Thereafter, a cumulative shortfall would arise requiring ever more demanding annual requirements if the housing requirement for the plan period were to be met.

That prediction of a wildly fluctuating supply seems to have turned out in practice. The expected cumulative shortfall for 2024-5, is now expected to occur a year later than anticipated, according to the Council's December 2020 Housing Land Supply Position Statement. It is reflected in the Council's calculation of its five-year supply. The Council's claim of a 4.35-year supply would have been even lower had it looked only to the future and not taken account of past performance exceeding the annual average of the plan's requirement. That seems to me to be a just approach, because it reflects reality, not a theoretical formula applied without consideration of actual outturns. Nevertheless, it should not blind one to the pressing need to identify land for housing for the remainder of the plan period. As is usual in these matters, the appellant seeks to throw doubt on the accuracy of the Council's calculation of its five-year supply by challenging the delivery programme of two of its component sites. The evidence for the deliverability of these two sites is contradictory but, in truth, it matters little. Whether the Council

has an identified supply of 4.35 years or a lesser figure if the two sites in contention are discounted, the fact is that it simply does not have a five-year supply now. Unless further sites for development are identified, either through emerging local plans or through the development management process, it is likely to have an even lower identified supply in future.

Consequently, in addition to enhancing the value which is placed on the benefit of providing housing, the shortfall means that paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF applies. This deems the policies which are most relevant for determining the application as out of date. It applies the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means granting permission unless NPPF policies to protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusal or unless any adverse effects of so doing would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. This NPPF paragraph is not disapplied by NPPF paragraph 177 because the appropriate assessment carried out earlier has concluded that the project would not adversely affect the integrity of the Severn Estuary SPA.

### *Schools*

It is accepted by both parties that the effect of the proposal on the demand for and provision of schools should be ascertained with reference to Department for Education guidance, *Securing developer contributions for Education* (November 2019).<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 3 of this guidance advises that it is important that the impacts of development are adequately mitigated, requiring an understanding of:

- The education needs arising from development, based on an up-to-date pupil yield factor;
- The capacity of existing schools that will serve development, taking account of pupil migration across planning areas and local authority boundaries;
- Available sources of funding to increase capacity where required; and
- The extent to which developer contributions are required and the degree of certainty that these will be secured at the appropriate time.

Pupil yield factors (also known as pupil product ratios) are used to estimate the numbers of children that would arise from a development. They should be based on up-to-date evidence from recent housing developments. In Gloucestershire the most up to date evidence from recent housing developments is to be found in what is known as the Cognisant Study of 2019, examining 8690 dwellings at seven settlements.

JCS policy INF6 requires that, in identifying infrastructure requirements, development proposals will also demonstrate that full regard has been given, where appropriate, to implementing the requirements of the JCS Infrastructure Delivery Plan (the IDP) of 2014. As the IDP pupil yield factors are based on a 2007 assessment, they are no longer the most up to date evidence from recent housing developments and so it is no longer appropriate to use them as a basis for estimates of the effects of development on the demand for and provision of schools.

However, the use of the Cognisant Study is itself problematic and has been opposed, although not technically challenged, by some of the very bodies which commissioned its production. It has produced results which are startlingly high

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<sup>3</sup> By following this advice, I have no need to come to a view on the allegation of the adoption by the County Council of a "new formulaic approach" denounced in national Planning Practice Guidance.

when compared with previous figures for the area and with other local authority areas. The reasons remain not fully explained.

The Cognisant Study appears to be based on survey results weighted to correct the balance of participating returns so as to correspond with actual mix of dwellings of different sizes on the developments surveyed. The survey was by face to face interviews with residents who agreed to participate, so was self-selecting. There is no report of any check on whether participants were representative of those who chose not to participate (perhaps because they had no children and so would not have been interested in a survey intended to establish child product ratios) nor any consequent weighting. Nor, as Mr Tiley points out, was any adjustment made for second homes or vacant dwellings. It would be wrong to presume that new developments are immune from the vicissitudes of life which cause dwellings to become vacant. For both these reasons, the child product ratio identified by the Cognisant Study will have been exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is the best and most recent evidence available.

In translating its child product ratios into pupil product ratios, the advice of paragraph 13 of the DfE advice is relevant. It does not require their moderation with regard to their effects on the viability of a development but it does observe that; "All education contributions are based on an assessment of probability and averages, recognising that the precise mix of age groups and school choices cannot be known before a development is built."

By contrast, the County Council's pupil product ratios take a fail-safe approach (or worst case scenario as the County Council's advocate described it in paragraphs 52, 56 and 57 of his closing submissions) of seeking to ensure provision for all contingencies rather than an assessment of probability and averages.

Consequently, as Mr Tiley points out, no allowance is made for parents who may choose to have their children educated outside of the state sector<sup>4</sup>. Paragraph 102 of the County Council's previously adopted Local Developer Guide noted that child yield was reduced to take account of these factors but the emerging Local Developer Guide (now adopted) does not. This omission contributes to exaggerate further the pupil product ratios used by the County Councils.

This particular cause of exaggeration would apply forcefully to early years calculations where, although local authorities have a duty to ensure early years childcare provision within the terms set out in the Childcare Acts and the DfE has scaled up state funding of early-year places, many early years settings fall within the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, as paragraph 9 of the DfE advice points out. But the exaggeration also applies, to a lesser degree, to the primary and secondary sectors.

Finally, as Mr Tiley correctly points out, the County Council's calculations of pupil product ratios take no account of the fact that most house moves take place over short distances with the result that many prospective child residents are already in attendance at Gloucestershire schools and would not be new to the system. The County's view that such house moves would be backfilled by new residents with equal demands on the school system is mistaken because, as is well known, average household sizes nationally are falling as a result of the fragmentation of families, delays in family formation and the greater longevity of elderly households whose children have left home. Gloucestershire is not exempt from these phenomena.

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<sup>4</sup> Although Mr Chandler, at paragraph 6.12 of his evidence, asserts that the Cognisant study only took account of pupils educated in state schools.

<sup>5</sup> I do not need to consider arguments about the status of the County Council's Local Developer Guide. What matters are the pupil product ratios themselves, not the vehicle in which they travel.

For all the above reasons, together with the County Council's record of overestimation of numbers of pupils in its forecasts<sup>6</sup>, I am not convinced by the County Council's calculations of the pupil demand likely to arise from the proposal. I find Mr Tiley's calculations more convincing, supported as they are by the "sense check" of the NEMS Market Research survey and by comparisons with other Local Education Authority areas. Nevertheless, in case I am mistaken, and to ensure the robustness of my decision, for the purposes of the remainder of this section of my decision, I use the "worst case scenario" of the County Council's figures, as does the appellant's expert, Mr Tiley; 28.5 pre-school places, 39 primary school places, 19 secondary school places and 6.5 post-16 places.<sup>7</sup>

The second bullet point of the DfE advice is to examine the capacity of existing schools that would serve the development. There is further DfE advice on how this is to be done in the form of its *School Capacity Survey 2019 Guide to forecasting pupil numbers in school place planning*. Projections of pupil numbers are to be made for primary years (reception to year 6) and for secondary years (years 7 to 11 (or 13 where schools have sixth forms)) using one set of planning areas for the primary projections and a second set for secondary years.

The planning areas should be mutually exclusive groups of schools that represent admissions patterns and reasonable alternatives to one another. National Planning Practice Guidance similarly refers to a need to consider school capacity within the relevant school place planning areas. There is no suggestion that the examination of capacity should be limited to only one primary and one secondary school to serve the development, yet this is what the County Council has done in basing its attitude towards the development on the view that Norton Primary School and All Saints Academy secondary school lack the capacity to serve the development.

In fact, in the current case, even to base an assessment on school planning areas rather than individual schools may be unrealistic because the site is located on the cusp of three primary school planning areas (Churchdown/Innsworth school planning area D35, Tewkesbury school planning area D10 and Hesters Way Cheltenham school planning area D32) and two secondary school planning areas (Tewkesbury D48 and Cheltenham D53). It lies within but close to the edges of Churchdown/Innsworth primary school planning area and Tewkesbury secondary school planning area.

The County Council seeks to justify its choice of examining capacity in a more limited way with reference to the distance to be travelled (incurring less public expenditure on transport costs) and the desirability, in terms of social cohesion, of accommodating all the pupils deriving from the development at a single school. I am not persuaded by these arguments for the following reasons.

Firstly, they do not appear to take account of parental choice. Secondly, in terms of social cohesion, there is no evidence to suggest that all present child residents of Coombe Hill attend the same primary and secondary schools together. Not all parents would support such attempts at social engineering in any event. Thirdly, Norton, at a distance of 2.9 miles from the appeal site may be the closest primary school to the appeal site but that is still at a distance which primary school children are unlikely to walk (although a footpath is provided the full length of the A38, it is not continuously on the same side of the road and so would require crossing the main road twice between Coombe Hill and Norton, an implausible proposition for unaccompanied children of primary school age) and so motorised transport is likely. If transported by car, the differences in distances involved (3 miles to Tredington, 3.2 miles to the other options) are unlikely to figure largely in parents'

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<sup>6</sup> Demonstrated in amended figures 10.3 and 10.4 of Mr Tyler's evidence

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 7.5 of Mr Chandler's proof of evidence

choices. If transported by public transport, the greater frequency of bus services to John Moore Primary School, even with a five minute walk to and from the bus stop, is likely to make an accompanied round trip more convenient than using the less frequent service to Norton. Fourthly, the difference in travel times and distances between the two secondary schools in contention; All Saints Academy (3.2 miles) and Tewkesbury School (4.7 miles) is again unlikely to be determinative of parental choice.

For all the above reasons, I am persuaded more by the appellant's approach to analysis of school capacity available to serve the development than by the County Council's analysis. There is a further dispute between the parties as to whether capacity means 100% occupancy of a school or (as the County Council argues) 95%. I accept the advice given in the Audit Commission's publication *Trading Place: the Supply and Allocation of School Places* that a sensible approach would be to plan for a 95% occupancy rate at schools and accept some variation, say plus or minus 10% around this target. That is to say that capacity means a figure of between 85 and 105% occupancy. In practice, it does not make any difference to the outcome in this case, when assessed across school planning areas or groups of proximate schools.

For pre-school provision, I note that paragraph 2.23 of the Statement of Common Ground on Educational Contributions acknowledges that "capacity may be available to meet demand." Nothing that I subsequently heard during the Inquiry causes me to reach a different conclusion. The SOCG notes that the utilisation of that capacity must be funded but that is an ongoing revenue cost. It is incurred whether the capacity is used by residents of existing or new development. Insofar as it is publicly funded, it is publicly funded from the taxes or rates of both new and existing residents as a revenue cost. There should not be an expectation of any capital contribution from new development on that account.

For primary schools, even using the County Council's exaggerated pupil product ratios, there would be sufficient capacity in 2023 within the Churchdown/Innsworth primary school planning area in which the appeal site lies to absorb the demand arising from the development without the need for expanding accommodation (between 92 and 203 spaces available, 39 required, resulting in 89.8-96.7% occupancy). Alternatively, looking across primary school planning areas to the nearest primary schools to the appeal site, there would be sufficient capacity to absorb the demand arising from the development without the need to expand accommodation. Indeed, one school (Queen Margaret Primary School) could accommodate all the children arising from the development without exceeding 95% occupancy.

Similarly, for secondary schools and sixth form demand, even using the County Council's exaggerated pupil product ratios, there would be sufficient capacity within the Tewkesbury Secondary School planning area in which the appeal site lies to accommodate the demand arising both from the development and from other committed developments, without any need for expanded premises. Tewkesbury School itself is forecast to have a surplus capacity of at least 373 places in 2024/5, more than sufficient to accommodate pupils expected to arise from other committed developments (161.5) as well as those which the Council expects to arise from the appeal proposal (19).

The Council argues that the capacity should be reserved for other allocations in its emerging Local Plan but there is no guarantee that they would be found sound or come forward, nor any reason why capacity should be reserved for those prospective developments rather than for the appeal in hand. Appraisals of the consequences of demand arising from new development are usually made on the basis of actual proposals as applications are made, together with committed

permissions. On that basis, there would be no shortfall requiring the appeal proposal to contribute to an expansion of capacity.

I therefore conclude that the effects of the proposal on the demand for and provision of schools would be acceptable without the need for any provision of expanded facilities. The appeal proposal would comply with Policy GNL11 of the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011 (adopted March 2006) and Policies INF4, INF6 and INF7 of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031. Amongst other matters, these require that planning permission will not be given unless the infrastructure and public services necessary to enable the development to take place are available.

It follows that I do not need to consider the third and fourth bullet points of the DfE advice on securing developer contributions for Education. It also follows that the provisions of the Unilateral Undertaking for financial contributions to be made in respect of Education contributions (the pre-school years contribution, the primary education contribution, the secondary education contribution and the sixth form education contribution) are unnecessary and so, do not meet the statutory tests of the CIL regulations. I have therefore taken no account of them in reaching my decision.

It also follows that I do not need to opine on a matter which took a considerable amount of inquiry time. That issue was the propriety and reasonableness of levying a CIL charge (apparently introduced and originally justified on the basis of raising money to be spent on the provision of education but subsequently the subject of a decision to divert the revenue to other causes) whilst simultaneously seeking contributions to education capital expenditure through planning obligations.

*Open space, outdoor recreation, sports and community facilities*

The County's case for seeking a financial contribution towards the provision of additional or improved library facilities in Tewkesbury to serve the development was not contested and appears to be well-founded. The inclusion of a financial contribution for this purpose within the Unilateral Undertaking would satisfy the need to make such a contribution towards the provision of that particular community facility. It appears to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related to it in scale and kind and so it would comply with the CIL regulations.

Paragraphs 1.26 and 5.2 and Schedule 3 of the Unilateral Undertaking to the Borough Council commit the developer to provide no less than 2.4ha of public open space on site, designed in such a manner as to encourage recreation activity to be diverted away from the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI, including a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) and laid out prior to the first occupation of any dwelling on site. The undertaking also makes provision for future maintenance of the open space. These arrangements would exceed the requirements of policy RCN1 of the Tewkesbury Local Plan to 2011 adopted in March 2006, which specifies a quantity of open space to be provided on site in proportion to the expected population, amounting to a total of 0.28 ha in this case. The proposals would comply with policies INF4, INF6 and INF7 of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031. Amongst other matters, these require that planning permission will not be given unless the infrastructure and public services necessary to enable the development to take place are available.

The quantity of open space proposed would also be adequate to serve the site under development adjacent to the Swan public house at Coombe Hill and so the arrangements would also comply with policy COO1 of the emerging local plan

which would require accessible open space to be provided on site for use by the wider community, contribute to the wider green infrastructure network envisaged by the JCS, deliver biodiversity net gains and mitigate against increased recreational pressures on the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI.

These arrangements set out in the Unilateral Undertaking would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, would be directly related to the development and would be fairly and reasonably related to it in scale and kind. They would therefore comply with the CIL regulations and so I have taken them into account in making this decision.

#### *Other matters*

A built heritage statement submitted with the application identifies a minor degree of harm to be caused to a Grade 2 listed building, Grange Farm Barn at Walton Grange Farm, to the north of the site. This might be thought to trigger the statutory duty set out at s66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990) to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

There is no suggestion that the development would have any effect on the preservation of the listed building but its setting does need to be considered. The barn can be seen across the site from the A4019 but, in that view, it can be seen that the barn is set within a huddle of buildings which comprise the farm complex and which is itself a part of the group of buildings which comprises the northernmost element of the scattered Coombe Hill settlement.

I do not demur from the opinion expressed in the appellant's built heritage statement that the primary experience of the listed building is in the immediate setting of its surrounding farm complex. Although the appeal site currently makes a minor positive contribution as a small part of the wider agricultural landscape which surrounds the hamlet of which the barn and farm buildings are a part, the essential character of the barn is that it is set within that hamlet and is not free-standing within the countryside.

Similarly, I concur with the conclusion of the built heritage statement that overall, the proposed development will likely result in a minor degree of harm to the significance of the Barn through a change to the wider setting of the heritage asset and the erosion of part of the wider agricultural context. Nobody other than the appellants' own consultant has commented on this matter and so I conclude that the harm would be so much less than substantial as to be practically imperceptible. Nevertheless, it is a harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal which I do in the concluding section of this decision.

#### *Planning balance*

As it turns out, subject to some of the Unilateral Undertakings and with the conditions attached to this permission, the planning balance is almost entirely one-sided. The site is an entirely appropriate location for new development of the scale proposed. There is nothing in the material before me to demonstrate that the effect of the quantity of development proposed on the character and appearance of the area need be anything other than acceptable. There would be an almost imperceptible degree of harm to the setting of a listed building. The proposal would have no significant adverse effects upon the integrity and conservation objectives of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site. The effects of the proposal on the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI would be acceptable.

The proposal would not increase the level of risk to the safety of occupants of the site, the local community or the wider environment and would contribute to a

reduction in existing flood risk. The housing to be provided would make a significant contribution to the supply of housing in Tewkesbury. Its benefit would be enhanced when considerations of both the inadequacy of supply inherent in the local plan and shortfalls in the current five-year housing land supply are taken into account. The effects of the proposal on the demand for and provision of schools would be acceptable without the need for any provision of expanded facilities. Provision for open space, outdoor recreation, sports and community facilities would meet and exceed development plan requirements. Overall, the public benefits of the proposal would clearly outweigh any minor harm to the setting of the nearby listed building and so the appeal should be allowed.

### *Conditions*

The parties suggested thirty-six conditions which they felt might be necessary in the event of my allowing the appeal. I have considered these in the light of national guidance and the tests set out in the NPPF, preferring where appropriate the model wording of the annex to the otherwise superseded circular 11/95, *the use of conditions in planning permissions*.

The first three conditions are required by law. The fourth applies the decisions of the courts in respect of parameter plans and is necessary to give effect to the appellants' request for the access to the site to be considered in detail. Condition (5) is necessary because the effects of the development have been considered in relation to a maximum number of dwellings.

Conditions (6), (7) and (8) are pre-commencement conditions necessary to secure details (or the implementation of details) of matters which would not necessarily be included in reserved matters. Some of these requirements (e.g condition 8(ii) are recommended by the appellants' consultants). Other requirements of these conditions are necessary to comply with an aspect of development plan policy. Conditions (9) and (10) are likewise intended to secure details (or the implementation of details) of matters which would not necessarily be included in reserved matters but which do not need to be pre-commencement conditions.

Condition 11 is necessary because Coombe Hill currently has no street lighting and the Parish Council is anxious to retain that rural characteristic; the condition would allow the Borough Council to give careful consideration to the characteristics of any lighting scheme proposed.

I have not included a requirement for the submission of a design principles document because I have found the previously submitted DAS to be adequate in establishing principles of design. JCS Policies SD3, SD4 and SD6, which apply design considerations, will continue to apply to reserved matters applications and to applications for the discharge of conditions; approval of this outline application does not override the need to comply with those policies when detailed applications are made.

Nor have I included a requirement for the submission of precise details or samples of external facing, roofing or hard surfacing materials because appearance is a reserved matter, details of which are anyway required by condition (1). The definition of appearance in the DMPO includes architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.

Likewise, I have not included a condition requiring the submission of details of boundary treatment because landscaping is also a reserved matter defined in the DMPO as including screening by fences, walls or other means. For similar reasons, other than the imposition of condition (7) applying the tree protection recommendations of the appellants' consultant, I have not included the suite of suggested conditions relating to landscaping and landscaping management plans because landscaping is a reserved matter, detailed submissions of which are

required anyway by condition (1) and which may obviate the necessity of the additional conditions suggested. If the detailed submissions give rise to the need for further conditions, they can be applied at that stage.

I have not included conditions requiring a survey of visitors to the Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows nature reserve for reasons explained earlier or for the preparation of a visitor management plan because that is best left to the discretion of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. I have not included conditions requiring the provision of open space because that is required by the Unilateral Undertaking given to the Borough Council. The provision of a LEAP is shown on plan 2 attached to the Undertaking, forming part of the definition of On Site Open Space in paragraph 1.26 of the obligation.

I have included condition 10(vi) because I am not entirely satisfied that the provisions of the Unilateral Undertaking to Tewkesbury Borough Council which would provide the Council with money to be used towards the preparation and provision of household information packs for each dwelling would necessarily ensure that each household would receive the packs containing the appropriate material as intended. Much of the intended content of the packs would need to be derived from material contained within the appellants' consultants' documentation and it would be the appellants who would have knowledge of the intended first occupation dates of each dwelling, so I do not think it would be sufficient simply to devolve responsibility to the Council by means of a payment.



Inspector

## APPEARANCES

### FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Meyric Lewis	Of counsel, instructed by Jeremy Patterson of Tewkesbury Borough Council
He called	
Karen Colebourn	Director and Principal Ecological Consultant at Ecological Planning & Research Ltd (EPR)
BSc(Hons) FCIEEM	Urban Design Officer, Tewkesbury Borough Council
Alice Goodall BSc MA MRTPI	Joint Core Strategy Planning Policy Manager
Hannah Millman B.Sc.(Hons), MSc, MRTPI	
Paul Hardiman LLB(Hons), PG Dip, MBA, MSc, CMILT, MRTPI	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Manager for the three Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Councils of Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough

Rachel Hill and Gary Spencer took part in the discussion on obligations and conditions

### FOR THE COUNTY COUNCIL:

Douglas Edwards QC	instructed by Bridgette Boucher, Senior Lawyer, Gloucestershire County Council
He called	
Stephen Chandler	Place Planning Manager, Gloucestershire County Council
BSc(Hons)	
Liz Fitzgerald BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI	Barker Parry Town Planning

Bridgette Boucher and Stephen Hawley took part in the discussion on obligations and conditions

### FOR THE APPELLANT:

Paul G Tucker QC	Assisted by Constanze Bell, of Counsel, instructed by David Hutchison of Pegasus Group
He called	
Tim Goodwin BSc(Hons) MSc MIEnvSc MCIEEM	Director, Ecology Solutions
Neil Tiley BSc(Hons) AssocRTPI	Director, Pegasus Group
Paul Harris BA DipLA CMLI	Director, MHP Design Ltd
David Hutchison BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI	Executive Planning Director, Pegasus Group

Robyn Evans took part in the discussion on obligations and conditions

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Colin Withers  
John Arkell  
Mike Smart  
Andy Eagle

Coordinator of Leigh Parish Neighbourhood Plan  
Leigh Parish Council  
Ornithologist  
Local resident

### **Additional DOCUMENTS submitted during the Inquiry**

- 1 Notification letters of date, time and nature of Inquiry
- 2 Ecology Statement of Common Ground
- 3 Statement of Common Ground on Educational Contributions
- 4 Statement of Common Ground on Housing Need and Supply
- 5 Statement of Common Ground on Matters relating to Drainage and Flooding
- 6 Planning Statement of Common Ground
- 7 Pre-Action Protocol letter from Robert Hitchins Group dated 15 March 2021 re Gloucestershire CC Local Development Guide
- 8 Response dated 22 March 2021 from Gloucestershire CC to Pre-Action Protocol letter
- 9 Mike Smart; Comments on ecological issues
- 10 Letter dated 23 March from Dr Gareth Parry of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- 11 Gloucester County Council CIL Compliance Statement dated 9 February 2021 (150 unit scheme)
- 12 Submission from Andy Eagle dated 24 March 2021
- 13 Natural England clarification of differences between editions of the Functionally Linked Land report
- 14 Gloucestershire County Council CIL Compliance Statement dated 24 March 2021 (95 unit scheme)
- 15 Natural England email confirming no material changes relating to Curlew or to Coombe Hill between editions of Functionally Linked Land report
- 16 Tewkesbury School Capacity
- 17 Borough Council CIL Compliance Statement
- 18 Report and Appendix B to Gloucestershire County Council Cabinet 24 March 2021 recommending adoption of revised Local Development Guide
- 19 Joint Statement of Mr Chandler and Mr Tiley
- 20 Technical Note: Drainage and Flood Risk
- 21 E-mail dated 16 April 2021 attaching Pioneer Property Services Briefing Paper: Affordable Housing Proposal
- 22 E-mail dated 18 April 2021 from Liz Fitzgerald confirming GCC's no comment on Technical Note: Drainage and Flood Risk
- 23 Inquiry Note; The potential regional park
- 24 JCS Green Infrastructure Strategy June 2014
- 25 E-mail from Borough Council concerning contaminated land
- 26 Appellant's response to e-mail concerning contaminated land
- 27 Completed Unilateral Undertaking to Tewkesbury Borough Council
- 28 Completed Unilateral Undertaking to Gloucestershire County Council

## CONDITIONS

- 1) Details of access (other than that approved in condition (4) below), appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale of each phase of development (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development of the relevant phase takes place and the development shall be carried out as approved.
- 2) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall be begun either before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission, or before the expiration of two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved, whichever is the later.
- 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: site location plan reference 100.P.1.2, Land Use, Access & Movement Parameters Plan reference P20-1585\_03 REV: A, Building Heights Parameters Plan reference P20-1585\_04 and unnumbered drawing included at Appendix D of the submitted Transport Assessment by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited entitled Access Junction and Visibility Splays.
- 5) The development hereby permitted shall provide no more than 95 dwellings.
- 6) No development shall take place until details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority;
  - (i) the phasing of development and the numbers of dwellings of each size and type to be provided within each phase of development.
  - (ii) off-site highway works, namely; widening of footway to 2m on A38; bus stop improvements on A38; bus stop signage and marking improvements and; informal crossing of A38.
  - (iii) a Construction Management Plan and Construction Waste Management Plan and Construction Ecological Management Plan.
  - (iv) notwithstanding the submitted archaeological evaluation report by Worcestershire Archaeology, a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been previously submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) No development on any phase of development shall take place until the tree protection measures detailed in the arboricultural impact assessment and tree protection plan, drawing number 19228.502, relevant to the phase in question, included as Appendix 4 of the submitted Arboricultural Survey, Impact Assessment and Protection Plan by MHP arboricultural consultants have been put in place. The tree protection measures shall be retained in place until the completion of the relevant phase of development.

- 8) No development on a phase of development shall take place until details of the following in relation to that phase have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority;
- (i) existing and proposed ground levels and finished floor levels above ordnance survey datum.
  - (ii) mitigation measures to achieve compliance with BS8233:2014 recommended internal and external noise levels.
  - (iii) notwithstanding the findings of the submitted Preliminary Geotechnical Design Report, any remedial measures which may be identified following an examination (in accordance with a methodology previously submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority) of potential contamination (a) by polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons migrating from the adjacent petrol filling station and (b) from two septic tank locations identified in the submitted Preliminary Geotechnical Design Report.
  - (iv) Foul and surface water drainage.
  - (v) Construction and loading capacity of the highways.
- The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 9) No development above ground on a phase of development shall take place until details of the following, in relation to the relevant phase, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority;
- (i) Facilities for the storage of waste, refuse and recycling materials for each dwelling.
  - (ii) Secure and covered cycle storage facilities for each dwelling.
- The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, which shall thereafter be retained for their intended use.
- 10) No dwelling shall be first occupied until the completion and bringing into use of the following;
- (i) The off-site highway works referred to in condition 6 (ii).
  - (ii) Its means of access for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians.
  - (iii) Its associated vehicle parking.
  - (iv) An associated electrical vehicle charging point.
  - (v) A full Travel Plan which shall have been previously prepared, submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.
  - (vi) A scheme of providing each dwelling with a Homeowner Information Pack detailing the location and sensitivities of the Coombe Hill Canal SSSI and the GWT's Coombe Hill Canal and Meadows Nature Reserve and alternative dog walking and recreational facilities.
- 11) No street lighting or other external lighting shall be installed without the prior submission of details to, and written approval of, the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

- 12) No more than 40 dwellings of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until the approved (as shown in PFA Consulting drawing ref H605-0101D General Arrangement), or approved alternative, scheme for the A40 Longford Roundabout has been implemented and is open to traffic.

**APPENDIX EPDS03**

**DfE Home\_to\_School\_Travel\_and\_Transport\_Guidance**

**Appeal by : TERRA STRATEGIC**

**Site at : Land to the south of the High Street, Tetsworth – 60 dwellings**

**(APP/Q3115/W/17/3182192)**



Department  
for Education

# Home to school travel and transport guidance

**Statutory guidance for local authorities**

**July 2014**

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## Summary

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. This means local authorities are under a duty to have regard to it when carrying out their duties in relation to home to school travel and transport, and sustainable travel.

This guidance is issued under duties placed on the Secretary of State by sections 508A and 508D of the Education Act 1996 (the Act). It deals with sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 509AD, and Schedule 35B of the Act which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the EIA 2006).

This guidance replaces Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance Ref: 00373-2007BKT-EN.

## Review date

This guidance will next be reviewed in 2015.

## What legislation (including statutory instruments) does this guidance refer to?

This guidance refers to the following legislation (including statutory instruments):

- Sections 444, 508A, 508B, 508C, 508D, 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 (the Act), as inserted by [Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) (the EIA 2006)
- Regulation 5 and Part 2 of Schedule 2 to The School Information (England) Regulations 2002, [as amended](#)
- Equality Act 2010
- [School Admissions Code](#)
- European Convention on Human Rights
- The School Travel (Pupils with Dual Registration)(England) Regulations 2007
- Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984
- Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- Local authorities
- Leaders of maintained schools, academies and free schools
- Parents
- Other interested parties, e.g. Transport Providers

## Main points

- There has been no change to school transport legislation and the associated duties continue to rest with local authorities.
- With the widening of the academies programme, the introduction of the free schools programme, and all schools now having the power to decide their session times, there will be an increasing need for local stakeholders to work together in partnership to agree and deliver transport policies that meet the particular needs of their area<sup>1</sup>.
- The guidance on appeals has changed and is intended to ensure greater consistency in approach and to be clearer and more transparent for both parents and local authorities.
- The policy for post 16 transport is different from that for compulsory school aged children (5-16). The link to the department's guidance on post 16 transport is provided in the '[Further information](#)' section of this guidance.
- Local authorities should review travel policies, arrangements and contracts regularly to ensure best value for money is achieved.

## Local authorities' statutory duties

In order to comply with their home to school transport duties local authorities must:

- Promote the use of sustainable travel and transport (Part 1.1).
- Make transport arrangements for all eligible children (Part 1.2).

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<sup>1</sup> See Hertfordshire County Council's approach to capacity building in the [case study at Annex 1](#).

# Part 1 - Statutory duties

## 1.1 Sustainable school travel

1. Section 508A of the Act places a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport<sup>2</sup>. The duty applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority's area<sup>3</sup>. The duty relates to journeys to and from institutions where education or training is delivered.

2. There are five main elements to the duty which local authorities must undertake:

- an assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area;
- an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;
- a strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for;
- the promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions; and
- the publication of Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

3. The Act defines sustainable modes of travel as those that the local authority considers may improve the physical well-being of those who use them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority's area, or a combination of the two.

## Assessing the travel and transport needs of children and young people

4. Local authorities should, in large part, base their assessment of children and young people's travel and transport needs on the data provided by schools or colleges, often contained within school travel plans. Effective school travel plans, updated as necessary, put forward a package of measures to improve safety and reduce car use, backed by a partnership involving the school, education, health and transport officers from the local authority, and the police. These seek to secure benefits for both the school and the children by improving their health through active travel and reducing congestion

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<sup>2</sup> See Darlington Borough Council's approach to sustainable travel in the [case study at Annex 1](#).

<sup>3</sup> 'Child', 'compulsory school age' and 'sixth-form age' are defined respectively in sections 579(1), 8 and 509 AC of the Act.

caused by school runs, which in turn helps improve local air quality. Many travel plans are produced as a result of planning conditions placed on new developments by local authority planning departments. This highlights the need for all relevant departments (e.g. highways departments, planning departments, transport departments, children's services, environment departments, and public health) to be fully engaged when addressing this duty.

## **Audit of infrastructure to support sustainable school travel**

5. Local authorities already collect much of the information required for the audit of the infrastructure supporting sustainable school travel. Local authorities should audit infrastructure in accordance with any relevant guidance and the requirements of any infrastructure implemented. Specific school routes audits are considered good practice. The specifics of the audit and how often it should be reviewed are for a local authority to decide on as appropriate. However, the audit should include a mapping exercise showing how schools are served by:

- bus and other public transport routes (including school transport provided by the local authority);
- footpaths, cycle ways, roads and associated features (including crossing points and patrols, traffic calming measures, speed limits, 20mph zones); and
- any other arrangements made to support sustainable school transport that may be in operation (including the provision of cycle training, road safety training, and independent travel training; the provision of walking promotion and barrier removal schemes, car sharing schemes, park and stride/ride schemes, cycle parking).

6. The audit should also consider data relating to [personal safety and security](#), and other factors that influence travel choices, such as poor behaviour on school buses and/or the incidence of bullying on the journey to school. School travel plans will help local authorities understand any specific local issues, including perceptions of pupils and parents.

7. The arrangements or requirements for children with special education needs (SEN) or disabilities should also be considered and whether, for example, some might benefit from independent travel training which can result in a skill for life<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See Coventry City Council's approach to independent travel training in the [case study at Annex 1](#).

## **Strategy to develop infrastructure to support travel needs of pupils**

8. Following the assessment of pupil needs, and audit of the sustainable transport infrastructure that supports travel to school, local authorities must establish a strategy for developing that infrastructure so that it better meets the needs of children and young people in their area. These improvements should address a range of objectives, including environmental improvements, health benefits and enhanced child safety and security. The strategy should be a statement of the authority's overall vision, objectives and work programme for improving accessibility to schools and will be an important source of information to parents on the travel options available to them when expressing their preferences for particular schools in the admissions round.

9. The strategy should be evidence-based, including an assessment of the accessibility needs and problems of the local authority's area. Local authorities must monitor the implementation of their strategy and revise these as they feel necessary.

## **Promoting sustainable travel and transport to and from school**

10. Local walking, cycling, and bus strategies should inform the local authority's duty to promote sustainable school travel. In line with the physical Olympic and Paralympic legacy, as set out in HM Government's document '[Moving More, Living More](#)', promotion of walking and cycling to school can be an effective way to increase physical activity in children.

11. The sustainable school travel duty should have a broad impact, including providing health benefits for children, and their families, through active journeys, such as walking and cycling. It can also bring significant environmental improvements, through reduced levels of congestion and improvements in air quality to which children are particularly vulnerable.

## **Publication of Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy**

12. The Education (School Information) (England) Regulations 2002, as amended require local authorities to publish their Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy on their website by 31 August each year<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> S.I. 2002/2897, amended by [The Education \(School Information\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2007 \(S.I. 2007/1365\)](#).

## 1.2 Provision of travel arrangements

13. Sections 508B and 508C of the Act make provision for local authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school.

14. These provisions apply to home<sup>6</sup> to school travel arrangements, and vice versa<sup>7</sup>. They do not relate to travel between educational institutions during the school day<sup>8</sup>.

15. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. However, section 444(3B) of the Act provides that a parent will have a defence in law against a prosecution by a local authority for their child's non-attendance at school where the local authority has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the child under section 508B and has failed to discharge that duty.

## 1.3 Provision of travel arrangements: Eligible children

16. Section 508B of the Act deals with the duty on local authorities to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children. Schedule 35B of the Act defines eligible children – those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16) in an authority's area for whom free travel arrangements will be required local authorities are required to:

### Statutory walking distances eligibility

- provide free transport for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) if their nearest suitable school<sup>9</sup> is:
  - beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or
  - beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

### Special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility

- make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of

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<sup>6</sup> A child's 'home' is the place where he/she is habitually and normally resident.

<sup>7</sup> Including to boarding provision, where applicable.

<sup>8</sup> When a dual placement is outlined on an EHC Plan or statement, a local authority should use its discretion to decide on how best to cater for this child's individual circumstances.

<sup>9</sup> Taken to mean the nearest [qualifying school](#) with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any SEN that the child may have.

associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability<sup>10</sup>. Eligibility, for such children should be assessed on an individual basis to identify their particular transport requirements. Usual transport requirements (e.g. the statutory walking distances) should not be considered when assessing the transport needs of children eligible due to SEN and/or disability.

### **Unsafe route eligibility**

- make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.<sup>11</sup>

### **Extended rights eligibility**

- provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit<sup>12</sup> if:
  - the nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11);
  - the school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);
  - the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).

## **Accompaniment**

17. In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk for the purposes of 'special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility' or 'unsafe route eligibility', the local authority will need to consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child. When considering whether a child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child on the journey to school a range of factors may need to be taken into account, such as the age of the child and whether one would ordinarily expect a child of that age to be accompanied.

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<sup>10</sup> As per Schedule 35 of The Act, disability is as defined in S.6 of EA 2010: a person has a disability if they have (a) a physical or mental impairment, and (b) that impairment has a substantial a long-term effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Therefore a chronic health condition may lead to eligibility under this definition.

<sup>11</sup> Paragraphs 4 and 5 of Schedule 35B.

<sup>12</sup> Paragraphs 9-14 of Schedule 35B.

18. The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent where necessary, unless there is a good reason why it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so.

19. Local authorities should, however, promote and ensure equality of opportunity for disabled parents. For example, if a parent's disability prevents them from accompanying their child along a walking route that would otherwise be considered unsafe without adult supervision, a reasonable adjustment might be to provide free home to school transport for the child in question.

### **Assessing route safety**

20. Creating safe walking, cycling and travel routes and encouraging more pupils to walk and cycle to school is one of the best ways to reduce the need for transport and associated costs. In assessing safety, local authorities should consider a range of risks, such as: canals, rivers, ditches, speed of traffic and fields of vision for the pedestrian or motorist. An authority should also consider whether it is reasonable to expect the child's parent to accompany the child along a route which would otherwise be classified as [being unsafe](#).

21. Good practice shows that using local knowledge, coupled with modern IT tools, is essential when assessing existing walking routes and identifying potential new ones. Putting in place suitable new paths, pedestrian crossings and cycle lanes can improve safety, but minimal investment can also reap significant rewards. This might be something as simple as trimming overgrown hedges or preventing illegal parking. Making parents aware of safe walking routes and the time taken to assess them can help alleviate concerns and significantly increase the amount of pupils choosing to walk.

### **Measurement of routes**

22. The measurement of the statutory walking distances is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, [may walk safely](#). As such, the route measured may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

23. The 2 mile limit for extended rights should be measured in the same way as the statutory walking distances. However, the 6 mile upper limit to a choice of schools, and the 15 mile upper limit to a school preferred on grounds of religion or belief are not walking routes, and should therefore be measured along routes that are passable using a suitable motorised vehicle. In short, the upper limits should be measured along road routes.

### **Timing of assessment of eligibility**

24. At the point when transport eligibility is considered, the prospect of being able to secure a place in an alternative (usually nearer) school must be a real one. For most

cases this will be during the normal school admissions round when places are allocated. A smaller number of cases will need to be considered during the course of the school year e.g. as a result of families moving to a new area.

25. Where entitlement to extended travel rights has been established the department's opinion is that local authorities should consider the pupil to be eligible for the entirety of the school year for which the assessment has been made. If a pupil ceases to be eligible any change to provision made by the local authority must be considered in the context of the potential impact on the child. Disruption to a child's education should be avoided.

26. Where a pupil is registered at a school, but is attending a place other than that school as a result of temporary exclusion, [eligibility for home to school travel](#) will apply to the other place for the temporary period.

## Qualifying school

27. The relevant educational establishment in relation to an eligible child will be either a qualifying school or the place, other than a school, where they are receiving education by virtue of arrangements made under section 19(1) of the Act<sup>13</sup>.

28. Regulations<sup>14</sup> clarify the entitlement for eligible children, a small number of whom may be registered at more than one educational establishment, e.g. children of no fixed abode might be registered at more than one school, and other children may be registered at a hospital school and another school, etc.

29. Qualifying schools are:

- community, foundation or voluntary schools;
- community or foundation special schools;
- non-maintained special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- maintained nursery schools; or
- city technology colleges (CTC), city colleges for the technology of the arts (CCTA) or academies, including free schools and University Technical Colleges (UTC)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Section 508B(10) of the Act.

<sup>14</sup> [The School Travel \(Pupils with Dual Registration\)\(England\) Regulations 2007](#) (S.I.2007/1367).

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 15 of Schedule 35B.

30. For children with SEN, an independent school can also be a qualifying school where this is named on the child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) or statement, or it is the nearest of two or more schools named.

### **Travel arrangements made by the local authority or other bodies/persons**

31. Examples of other bodies or persons making travel arrangements might include: a parent consenting to use their car in return for a mileage allowance; a school or group of schools reaching an agreement with a local authority to provide transport in minibuses owned by the school; or a transport authority providing free passes for all children on public transport. For example, in London, Transport for London provides free bus passes for all children under the age of 16. In many circumstances, London Boroughs may therefore not need to make any additional travel arrangements for children living in their area, particularly when eligibility would be through statutory walking distances or extended rights.

32. Subsection (4) of 508B and 508C of the Act list some of the travel and transport arrangements that may be made. These might include: provision of a seat on a bus or minibus provided by the local authority; provision of a seat in a taxi where more individualised arrangements are necessary; and provision of a pass for a public service bus, or other means of public transport.

33. On condition that the relevant parental consent has been obtained (annually or, if a child moves school, at that point too) by the local authority, a number of alternative arrangements might be considered to meet the local authority duty relating to travel arrangements. Examples include:

- a mileage allowance paid to a parent driving their eligible child to school in lieu of the local authority making arrangements for a taxi to transport the child;
- a cycling allowance paid by the local authority where the parent agreed for their child to cycle to and from school instead of catching a bus for, say a three mile journey; and
- local authority provision of a suitable escort to enable an eligible child with a disability to walk a short distance to school in safety, instead of making arrangements for a taxi to take them to and from school.

### **Suitability of arrangements**

34. As a general guide, transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time. Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be

more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.

35. Consideration should also be given to the walking distance required in order to access public transport. The maximum distances will depend on a range of circumstances, including the age of the child, their individual needs and the nature of the routes they are expected to walk to the pick up or set down points and should try to be combined with the transport time when considering the overall duration of a journey. With regards to pick up points, local authorities may at their discretion use appropriate pick up points when making travel arrangements. For arrangements to be suitable, they must also be safe and reasonably stress free, to enable the child to arrive at school ready for a day of study.

## Part 2 - Discretionary Arrangements

### Travel arrangements for other children

36. Section 508C of the Act provides local authorities with discretionary powers to go beyond their statutory duties and provide transport for children who are not entitled to free transport. Charges can be made, or, as stated in Subsection (5) of 508C local authorities may also pay all or part of the reasonable travel expenses of children who have not had travel arrangements made either under the statutory duty placed on local authorities, or under their discretionary powers to make travel arrangements. Where charges are imposed, good practice suggests that children from low income groups (those not eligible for extended rights, either due to being just outside financial eligibility or live outside of the distance criteria and therefore not in receipt of free travel) should be exempt.

37. It is very much for the individual local authority to decide whether and how to apply this discretion as they are best placed to determine local needs and circumstances. It is recognised that local authorities will need to balance the demands for a broad range of discretionary travel against their budget priorities. While the department offers guidance, the final decision on any discretionary travel arrangements must rest with the individual local authority who should engage with parents and clearly communicate what support they can expect from the local authority.

### Religion or belief

38. Many parents will choose to send their children to a school as near as possible to their home. However, some parents choose to send their children to a school with a particular ethos because they adhere to a particular faith, or belief. Local authorities need to respect parents' religious and philosophical convictions as to the education to be provided for their children<sup>16</sup>, give careful consideration to discrimination issues and seek legal opinion if they are unsure about the effect of their policies, before publishing them each year.

39. Under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), parents do not enjoy a specific right to have their children educated at a school with a religious character or a secular school, or to have transport arrangements made by their local authority to and from any such school and the Equality Act 2010 (which places a duty on local authorities

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<sup>16</sup> Article 2 of the First Protocol.

not to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their religion or belief), does not apply to the exercise of an authority's functions in relation to transport<sup>17</sup>.

40. However, the Secretary of State continues to attach importance to the opportunity that many parents have to choose a school or college in accordance with their religious or philosophical beliefs, and believes that wherever possible, local authorities should ensure that transport arrangements support the religious or philosophical preference parents express. In many cases these schools may be more distant and therefore the provision of transport and/or training, and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure on travel are encouraged. However, the department appreciates that this may be incompatible, for example, on grounds of excessive journey length, or where the journey may have a detrimental impact on the child's education.

41. The Act places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements for secondary pupils from [low income](#) backgrounds to attend the nearest school preferred on grounds of "religion or belief", where that school is between 2 and 15 miles from their home. Local authorities may wish to use their discretionary powers to extend transport arrangements beyond the extended rights duty and facilitate attendance at such schools. The Secretary of State expects local authorities to consider all possible options before they disturb well established arrangements, some of which have been associated with local agreements or understandings about the siting of such schools. Local authorities should pay particularly careful attention to the potential impact of any changes on low income families (those not eligible under extended rights) whose parents adhere to a particular faith or philosophy, and who have expressed a preference for a particular school because of their religious or philosophical beliefs.

42. Local authorities will need to be aware of their obligation not to discriminate under article 14 of ECHR. For example, where local authorities use their discretionary powers to make travel arrangements for children on the basis of their parents' religious beliefs to schools designated with a religious character, the equalities implications should be considered, to facilitate parents' who wish their children to be educated in accordance with their philosophical convictions.

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<sup>17</sup> s31 of, and paragraph 11 of Schedule 3 to, the Equality Act 2010.

## Part 3 - Transport Considerations

### Safeguarding requirements

43. It is the responsibility of the individual local authority to ensure the suitability of its employees and any contractors or their employees by undertaking the required safeguarding checks on those whose work or other involvement will bring them into contact with children, or more widely, vulnerable adults. This should include bus drivers, taxi drivers and escorts, as necessary. The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) have merged to become the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS). CRB checks are now called DBS checks. Please see [Further information](#).

### Training and Equalities

44. All local authorities should ensure that all drivers and escorts taking pupils to and from school and related services have undertaken appropriate training, and that this is kept up to date. It is also considered good practice for those responsible for planning and managing school transport to have undertaken appropriate equality training. This training could consist of (but is not restricted to):

- an awareness of different types of disability including hidden disabilities;
- an awareness of what constitutes discrimination;
- training in the necessary skills to recognise, support and manage pupils with different types of disabilities, including hidden disabilities and certain behaviour that may be associated with such disabilities;
- training in the skills necessary to communicate appropriately with pupils with all types of different disabilities, including the hidden disabilities; and
- training in the implementation of health care protocols to cover emergency procedures.

### Bus safety considerations

45. Buses and coaches used to take pupils to and from school are public service vehicles and, as such, are subject to specific legislation on safety standards. All coaches and minibuses carrying groups of children of 3 to 15 years of age on organised trips are required to be equipped with seat belts. The legal requirement to fit seat belts does not apply to other types of bus, including those on public service. These tend to travel relatively slowly, over short distances, with frequent stops. Schools or local authorities making arrangements for home to school transport are free to specify within their contracts that they will only accept vehicles fitted with seatbelts.

46. The [Public Service Vehicles \(Carrying Capacity\) Regulations 1984](#) allow the option of three children under the age of 14 to occupy a bench seat designed for two adults on a

service bus. Modern bus designs and seat belt requirements are reducing the circumstances in which this practice can be adopted and in the opinion of the Secretary of State, local authorities making arrangements for home to school travel should only make use of this concession on an exceptional basis.

## Poor behaviour on school buses/other modes of transport

47. The department expects each school to promote appropriate standards of behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour. The EIA 2006 empowers headteachers to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when pupils are not under the legal control of the school, but when it is reasonable to do so. In the department's view, this would include behaviour on school buses, or otherwise on the route to and from school, whether or not the pupils are in school uniform.

48. A number of local authorities have adopted a policy of withdrawing transport, either for a temporary period, or permanently for more serious or repeated cases of misbehaviour. Equally, the behaviour of pupils outside school can be considered as grounds for exclusion. This will be a matter of judgment for the Headteacher<sup>18</sup>. Local authorities might also consider that escorts are necessary to ensure safety of pupils on buses and can stipulate the provision of suitable escorts in their tender documents.

## Partnership

49. The department strongly supports local authorities in developing cross-cutting approaches to home to school travel and transport. Relevant considerations would include sustainability, delivering value money and finding school and parent friendly solutions. This could be through strong partnerships between local authorities and academies, the use of Department for Transport policies and practices, such as Local Transport Plans and Local Sustainable Transport fund (see [Further information](#)) and partnership with parents, for example to allow them to top up transport costs through the payment of fees in order to maintain the provision.

50. Partnerships are strongly encouraged, particularly in rural areas, where the generally more limited transport services could disadvantage children<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

<sup>19</sup> See Staffordshire County Council's approach to rural travel provision in [case study at Annex 1](#).

## **Part 4 – Policy Changes**

### **Publication of general arrangements and policies**

51. Local authorities must publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age. This information should be clear, easy to understand and provide full information on the travel and transport arrangements. It should explain both statutory transport provision, and that provided on a discretionary basis. It should also set out clearly how parents can hold local authorities to account through their appeals processes. Local authorities should ideally integrate their Sustainable Modes of School Travel strategies into these policy statements, and publish them together.

### **Policy Changes**

52. Local authorities should consult widely on any proposed changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements with all interested parties. Consultations should last for at least 28 working days during term time. This period should be extended to take account of any school holidays that may occur during the period of consultation.

53. Good practice suggests that the introduction of any such changes should be phased-in so that children who start under one set of transport arrangements continue to benefit from them until they either conclude their education at that school or choose to move to another school. Parents make school choices based on, amongst other things, the home to school transport arrangements for a particular school, and any changes might impact adversely on individual family budgets.

## Part 5 - Appeals process

54. Local authorities should have in place both complaints and appeals procedures for parents to follow should they have cause for complaint about the service, or wish to appeal about the eligibility of their child for travel support. The procedure should be published alongside the local authority travel policy statement. If an appellant considers that there has been a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way an appeal was handled they may have a right to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman. If an appellant considers the decision of the independent appeals panel to be flawed on public law grounds, they may apply for a judicial review.

55. In the past we have left it to local authorities to determine how their appeals procedures should operate in practice. However, in the interests of consistency and to be both clearer and more transparent, for both parents and local authorities, we have now set out a recommended review/appeals process in [Annex 2](#).

## Further information

### Post-16 transport

Guidance relating to post-16 transport is available on the [department's website](#)

### Sustainable transport

British Cycling is the national governing body for cycling and can provide advice on cycling to school and cycle training. More information is available at [www.britishcycling.org.uk](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk)

Department for Transport funding is available to Local Highway Authorities and Schools Games Organiser Host Schools for the provision of Bikeability cycle training for school children in England. This will teach children to cycle safely, confidently and competently on the roads. More information is available here: [www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/schools](http://www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/schools)

The Department for Transport Local Sustainable Transport Fund was established to support authorities in delivering local economic growth whilst cutting carbon emissions from transport. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-sustainable-transport-fund>

Living Streets runs the national Walk to School campaign which reaches over 13 million people. The campaign successfully encourages and supports parents/carers and children to make walking to school part of their daily routine. More information is available on their website [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)

Modeshift is the national sustainable travel organisation. Modeshift supports local authorities, schools, business and communities to increase levels of sustainable travel. More information is available on their website [www.modeshift.org.uk](http://www.modeshift.org.uk)

Moving More, Living More is a document produced by the Department of Health which builds on the work already under way to help realise the aim of having a more physically active nation as part of the legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/279657/moving\\_living\\_more\\_inspired\\_2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279657/moving_living_more_inspired_2012.pdf)

Sustrans is the leading sustainable transport charity that provides practical advice that can be passed onto parents to increase confidence in walking and cycling. More information is available on their website: [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

### DBS (formerly CRB) employee suitability checks

Further information about DBS checks (and who requires them or is eligible, for example bus drivers for designated home to school transport are eligible, whereas those driving

public services are not) can be obtained from: <https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check>

## Definitions

- Section 444(5) of the Act defines the statutory walking distances.
- Schedule 35B of the Act defines:
  - ‘eligible children’ (paragraphs 2-7 and 9-13);
  - ‘qualifying school’ (paragraph 15);
  - ‘disabled child’ (paragraph 15(4));
  - ‘religion and belief’ (paragraph 15(6)) and 509AD of the Act;
  - ‘low income family’ (paragraphs 9-14).
- Section 579 of the Act defines ‘child’.
- Section 509AC of the Act defines ‘compulsory school age’.
- The Equality Act 2010 defines ‘religion or belief’ for the purposes of this Act.
- The Children’s and Families Act section 10 defines ‘SEN’

## Key term Glossary

- Home: A child's 'home' is the place where he/she is habitually and normally resident.
- Nearest suitable school: Taken to mean the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any SEN that the child may have.
- Parent: Reference to parent in this document should be equated to mean parent/carer/legal guardian.
- Philosophical Belief: For a philosophical "belief" to be worthy of protection, it must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; be worthy of respect in a democratic society; and not be incompatible with human dignity or the fundamental rights of the child. Examples of beliefs are humanism and atheism.
- Road routes: Reference to road route should be taken to mean a route passable by a motor vehicle, and could include distance covered on additional transport, e.g. via ferry.

## **Annex 1: Case Studies**

### **Sustainable travel**

Effective sustainable travel plans have wider benefits for a local area than simply improving access to schools and education. Evidence shows that school travel plans can have benefits ranging from increased road safety, to healthier, more alert and engaged pupils, to increasing independent travel and associated life skills for pupils with SEN. Enabling the increased use of sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport has environmental benefits in reducing levels of noise, congestion and poor air quality - the latter of which children are particularly at risk to.

### **Darlington Borough Council case study**

#### **Impact/benefits**

The data from 2011-12 indicates that on average, 7% of secondary school pupils are choosing to cycle to school. Before the Local Motion initiative began, this figure stood at just 1%.

#### **Details of the approach**

Darlington Borough Council has encouraged a modal shift away from the car to more sustainable modes under the brand 'Local Motion'. The Local Sustainable Transport Fund has provided funding for the continuation of this project since 2011. It ensures that schools, young people and their families receive relevant information, to enable them to choose sustainable travel options to get to and from school.

#### **How was the change made?**

The whole schools package is underpinned by the Modeshift STARS online accreditation scheme which recognises and rewards each school's commitment to promoting sustainable travel. All Darlington schools must engage with Modeshift STARS in order to access other support and resources from the Local Motion project.

A new Year 6 Transition Programme has been introduced to help pupils and their parents make informed choices about sustainable travel options to the secondary school they will be attending.

All Darlington secondary schools have converted to academy status, but have continued to engage with the Local Motion programme and continue to support sustainable travel.

## **Advice for other LAs contemplating such an initiative**

The Local Motion Transition encourages families to start thinking about how they are going to travel to secondary school long before they start at the school, to avoid relying on private cars.

For further information please email Louise Neale: [louise.neale@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:louise.neale@darlington.gov.uk)

## Stoke-on-Trent case study

### Impact/benefits

After just one year of Sustrans' engagement (2013/14) regular cycling amongst pupils (once or twice a week or more) increased from 8.5% to 12.7% and those regularly being driven (once or twice a week or more) decreased from 49.9% to 45.3%. This is helping to reduce the impact of congestion from education travel which is estimated to cost £2.6m per year.

### Details of the approach

Stoke is one of eight partner local authorities in the Access to Education (A2E) programme, led by Devon County Council and coordinated by Sustrans. It is funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

Using locally-tailored packages Sustrans provide a real alternative to the car for trips to schools, colleges and universities, reducing congestion, improving journey reliability and boosting local economies.

### How was the change made?

- Intensive engagement from two Sustrans officers working with 21 primary and seven secondary schools
- Provision of 'Access to Bikes School Hubs' – shipping containers that contain 15 bikes, helmets, hi-viz jackets, pumps, locks, lights and maintenance tools placed in nine schools
- Installation of cycle parking and scooter pods at schools
- A programme of highway safety improvements, including new crossings and off-road cycle access links from residential areas to schools

### Advice for other LAs contemplating such an initiative

Schools need to have intensive support over an extended period of time which would include building the skills, knowledge and confidence of 'champions' to deliver the ongoing work. The Sustrans School Mark, an accreditation scheme which recognises and supports schools' excellence in active and sustainable travel, provides a framework to drive this forward.

For further information please email Allan Williams: [allan.williams@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:allan.williams@sustrans.org.uk)

## **Home to school travel assistance for pupils with SEN or disabilities**

Research indicates that there can be significant short and long term benefits in the application of independent travel training for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. The training given can result in savings to transport budgets in the short term, but can also provide longer term benefits to the individual in terms of a skill for life that might lead to greater social inclusion and employment prospects.

### **Coventry City Council case study**

#### **Impact/savings achieved**

As a result of this initiative and tighter control and work to secure efficiencies in the operation of the home to school travel assistance programme the Council made £326k savings in 2011/12. The savings made in 2012/13 equated to £374k which includes the reductions in expenditure on home to school escorts. The total reduction over the 2 years is a 19% fall in expenditure.

#### **Details of the new approach**

Successful work has been undertaken to provide independent travel training for secondary aged pupils and the provision of personal transport budgets to the parents of pupils in special schools. This has enabled young people to become more independent and given them valuable skills for life, as well as securing a reduction in spending for the Council.

#### **How was the change made?**

Impower Consultancy was commissioned to identify potential efficiencies. Focus groups of parents of pupils with SEN or disabilities were formed to seek views and identify new ways of working. Two key work streams were then established to take forward the provision of Independent Travel Training and Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs).

Two travel trainers now focus their work on school aged pupils, to help them improve their independence skills. This also reduces the number of adults needing training in subsequent years.

The Council also developed a scheme to offer PTBs to parents. The funding was high enough to incentivise parents, while being low enough to deliver savings for the Council. This was piloted in one school initially and then rolled out across all the special schools.

#### **Advice for other LAs implementing the change**

Special school headteachers are fully involved in this initiative and they help identify suitable young people to undertake training.

Contacting parents by telephone was resource intensive, but very positive in terms of fully explaining the benefits and options. PTBs are voluntary, tailored and non-prescriptive. The attendance and punctuality of pupils with a PTB is monitored. Beyond this there is no prescription and parents are not asked to account for expenditure.

For further information please email Marian Simpson: [marian.simpson@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:marian.simpson@coventry.gov.uk)

## **Capacity building with schools and transport operators**

In a financial climate where spending is reduced and costs are increasing local authorities may well find that they have less funding available to support discretionary transport provision, but there may be alternative solutions.

Many academies, with support from their local communities, are taking full advantage of their academy freedoms and are collaborating with other stakeholders and providers to offer discretionary transport to their schools. Local authorities can greatly assist with these initiatives by sharing their experience, expertise and influence in the procurement of transport.

## **Hertfordshire County Council case study**

### **Impact/savings achieved**

£5-6 million will be saved each year as a result of schools and commercial operators providing discretionary travel on routes previously funded and delivered by the Council.

### **Details of the new approach**

From September 2012 Hertfordshire County Council introduced a statutory only home-school transport policy. The Council was keen to attract third party providers to arrange transport on routes which it had previously organised and subsidised and that catered mainly for children without a statutory entitlement to home to school transport.

The Council has worked to build capacity locally to encourage and enable schools, community groups and commercial operators to provide school transport. From September 2013 a total of 130 routes to schools of preference operate without a financial subsidy from the Council. Thirty of these routes have been operating since April 2012.

### **How was the change made?**

The Council supported schools and parents to help develop transport plans. The Council also secured the involvement of the commercial sector and promoted awareness of business opportunities to it.

### **Advice for other LAs implementing the change**

Commercial operators require routes to be financially secure, and therefore are only likely to consider taking on routes where there is a predicted, fare paying commitment from parents. School transport only accounts for 192 days a year.

Local authorities should act as facilitators with the commercial sector, to help schools with contracts and to ensure competition law is followed. Models should rely on parents being able to fund their family's school transport, without any subsidy from the LA. In the

current financial climate, there has been more opportunity for commercial coach companies to participate in this market, rather than commercial bus companies.

For further information please email Sarah Vize: [sarah.vize@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.vize@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Demand responsive service in rural areas**

Counties with a large number of small rural communities face the challenge of ensuring that children in these communities are transported to their local schools whilst also providing a cost efficient transport network to the wider community to avoid rural isolation. Rural transport is essential in sustaining local rural communities and connecting people with essential services.

## **Staffordshire County Council case study**

### **Impacts/Benefits**

As a result of replacing infrequent existing local service buses and incorporating home to school transport on to a demand responsive service, a sustainable service has been developed which transports children to school and enables the rural population to be connected with essential services and the wider community. Children that have been transported to school frequently go on to use the service when they move up to middle or high school, increasing their independence despite their rural location.

### **Details of the approach**

Moorlands Connect, a Demand Responsive Service was launched in 2010. The service incorporates the home to school transport to two village schools within the operating area which covers approximately 125 square miles. Outside school transport times the vehicles can be booked as a door to door service to transport people to work, appointments or other essential journeys. Using smaller vehicles and a demand responsive approach that is not tied to a scheduled route has meant that remote areas now have access to a service.

### **How was the change made?**

A rural transport review was commissioned in 2008 and recommended the implementation of a demand responsive service. Residents in the area were consulted and current services, including home to school transport, were reviewed to establish which services could be incorporated on to a new service to increase its sustainability. Funding was sourced from various external agencies for the purchase of two fully accessible vehicles that carry bicycles and the service was launched in September 2010. It continues to be well used by the local communities and also by visitors to the area who can get out and about in the Peak District using the service.

### **Advice for other LA's implementing the change**

The process in setting up the service should include service demand evaluation, assessment of service options, the associated costs and, importantly, comprehensive consultation. Such service complements existing local bus services and provides

alternative choice for passengers. The latter ensures new and continuing public and political support for the scheme. Ticketing options need to be considered, including onward ticketing and potential integration with the local bus service(s). All funding options should be explored at a local and national level; this connect service received initial funding from Districts, Staffordshire Police and Fire services. Once the service is operational there is the need to monitor and evolve the service to meet ongoing needs and changing travel patterns.

For further information please email: [kathryn.grattage@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.grattage@staffordshire.gov.uk)

## Annex 2: Recommended Review/Appeals Process

Previous guidance made clear that local authorities should have in place and publish their appeals procedures, but left it to the individual authority to determine how this should operate in practice. We are now recommending that local authorities adopt the appeals process set out below, appreciating that specifics, such as the identification of an appeal compared to a complaint, will need to be decided by local authorities. The intention is to ensure a consistent approach across all local authorities, and to provide a completely impartial second stage, for those cases that are not resolved at the first stage.

Local authorities should publish annually their appeals process on their website. This should set out a clear and transparent two stage process (with paper copies available on request) for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:

- the transport arrangements offered;
- their child's eligibility;
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances; and
- the safety of the route.

### Stage one: Review by a senior officer

- A parent has 20 working days<sup>20</sup> from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request a senior officer reviews the original decision and sends the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review, setting out:
  - the nature of the decision reached;
  - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB<sup>21</sup>);
  - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
  - what factors were considered;
    - the rationale for the decision reached; and

---

<sup>20</sup> As with the whole appeals process the timings are recommended and not compulsory. We envisage many appeals will be dealt with much sooner than these timings, particularly those which have a time pressure, whilst complex cases may take longer.

<sup>21</sup> Road Safety GB is the sole published standards known to the department, hence referenced.

- information about how the parent can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

## **Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel**

A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.

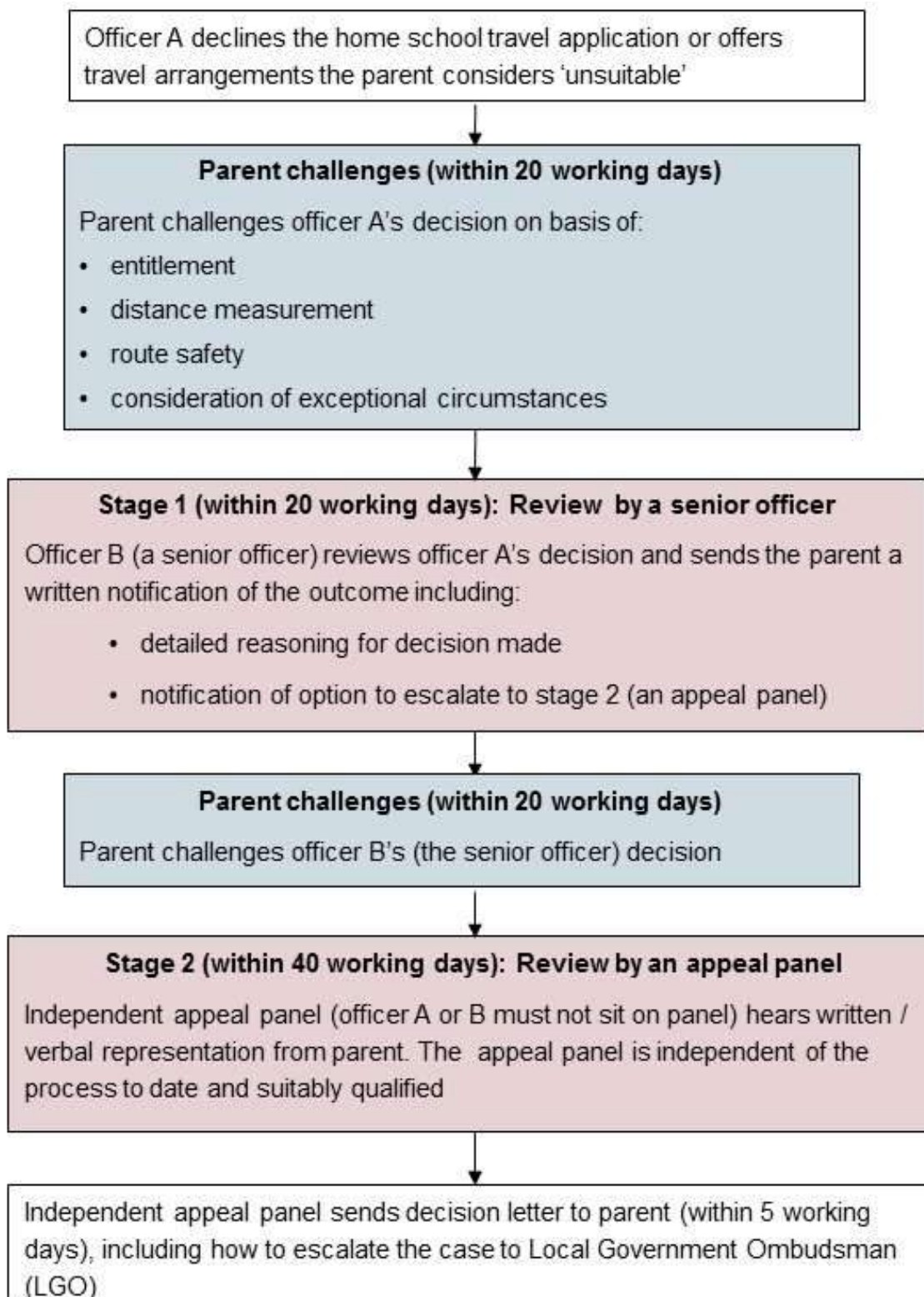
Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents request an independent appeal panel considers written and verbal representations from both the parent and officers involved in the case and gives a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days), setting out:

- the nature of the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- the rationale for the decision reached; and
- information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

The independent appeal panel members should be independent of the original decision making process (but are not required to be independent of the local authority) and suitably experienced (at the discretion of the local authority), to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of the parents and the local authority, and that road safety requirements are complied with and no child is placed at unnecessary risk.

Local Government Ombudsman – it is recommended that as part of this process, local authorities make it clear that there is a right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, but only if complainants consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled. If the complainant considers the decision of the independent panel to be flawed on public law grounds, the complainant may also apply for judicial review.

## Home to school travel and transport: flowchart of the review/appeals process





Department  
for Education

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East Sussex County Council

School Organisation Plan

2025 to 2029



**EDUCATION**  
**EAST SUSSEX**  
TOGETHER FOR EXCELLENCE  
AND INCLUSION



# Foreword

Welcome to East Sussex County Council's School Organisation Plan. The plan is a 4-year rolling plan. It sets out how East Sussex County Council (the local authority) will meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places in the right locations to meet demand. It is updated every year.

Our Excellence for All vision sets out our shared commitment to an education system where all children belong and there is a culture of inclusion embedded across the county. In addition our East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy sets out the shared ambitions we aim to achieve across education, health, and social care over the next three years for children and young people with SEND.

We are anticipating significant changes to the government's approach to SEND and Inclusion, aligned to national changes in accountability, curriculum, assessment and inspection. A government White Paper is due to be published in early 2026. Through our work with the SEND & AP (Alternative Provision) Change programme, a government plan to improve support for children with SEND, it is clear that there will be a strong focus on inclusion in schools. Specifically a focus on more children with SEND and additional needs in mainstream schools.

Over the plan period the biggest challenge for the local authority will continue to be the growing demand for special educational needs provision linked to the rising number of children and young people with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). In recent years, the local authority has delivered 359 new special school and specialist facility places, to help address the increasing demand for special educational needs provision and to manage the high cost of placements in non-maintained and independent special schools. Our SEND place planning strategy will continue to deliver more special educational needs provision during the lifetime of the plan.

At the same time there will be areas of the county where demand for mainstream school places is low as a result of the continuing decline in the birth rate. This creates its own challenges for schools in terms of their medium to long term viability. Our Small Schools Policy is part of the local authority's strategy to help small schools remain sustainable and at the heart of their local communities.

For September 2025, we are pleased to confirm that we were able to offer a place at a preferred school to:

- Primary Reception year: 98.1% of applicants
- Junior Year 3: 100% of applicants
- Secondary Year 7: 96.5% of applicants

The local authority continues to face challenges related to the capital cost of providing school places. There is an imbalance between the significant cost of providing new places and the funding that we receive. To help to address this and reduce the local authority's reliance on borrowing, we will continue to work closely with the District and Borough Councils to ensure that housing developments in the county contribute where

necessary towards the cost of building education infrastructure to serve those developments.

In East Sussex we have a history of strong partnership working; something we are rightly proud of. Collaboration with all our schools and settings is essential to ensure that we continue to play a strong and consistent role in shaping the local education offer for our children and young people. We are grateful to school leaders, academy trusts, diocesan colleagues and other key partners for their continued support in helping to shape our strategic planning for education provision in East Sussex.

We hope that you will find this document of interest and we welcome any comments you might have on the plan.



**Bob Standley**  
**Lead Member for Education, Inclusion,  
Special Educational Needs and Disability**



**Carolyn Fair**  
**Director of Children's Services**

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# Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure there are enough school places available in their area to meet demand, as set out in section 14 of the Education Act 1996. In line with these duties, East Sussex County Council (the local authority) publishes a School Organisation Plan each year which sets out how we will provide enough primary, secondary and special educational needs places in the right locations to meet demand. This School Organisation Plan covers the period 2025 to 2029.

The document contains information on:

- the current pattern of school provision across the county
- forecasts for future school numbers
- our plans to meet the need for more places in areas of growth
- our plans to address the over-supply of places in areas with falling rolls

The need for school places fluctuates in response to population changes, new housing developments and government policy. It can lead to rising as well as declining pupil numbers. Increases in demand can lead to the establishment of new schools or the expansion of existing schools. Decreases in demand can lead to a reduction in places through changes to admission arrangements or the rationalisation of provision.

The purpose of the School Organisation Plan is to share the projected demand for school places in the future. It sets out where we should commission extra places or re-organise existing provision. It is a contextual document, providing the framework within which proposals for change may be brought forward. Any reviews of education provision we undertake and any recommendations for school re-organisation will, in part, be based on information contained in the plan. For example, opening, closing, amalgamating, expanding or reducing the size of schools.

Over the plan period there will continue to be growing demand for special educational needs provision linked to the rising number of children and young people with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). At the same time there will be areas with a declining demand for mainstream school places as a result of the falling birth rate in the county. Some schools will face challenges associated with falling rolls. This can create budget pressures and impact on decisions of school leadership and organisation.

The local authority seeks to ensure there are the right number of school places in the right locations, with the aim of providing a high quality and inclusive education for all children and young people in East Sussex. Alongside our statutory duty to ensure there are enough school places to meet demand, we are responsible for promoting a good supply of places at strong schools through planning, organising, and commissioning places in a way that raises attainment, increases diversity, encourages collaboration between schools and promotes community cohesion.

To achieve this, the local authority works closely with:

- school leaders, including headteachers and governing boards
- academy trusts
- the Diocese of Chichester and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
- local communities
- local planning authorities and developers

# Policies and strategies

The School Organisation Plan is one of several policies and strategies that link to wider education provision in East Sussex. Others include:

## Excellence for All

[Excellence for All](#) sets out our collective vision with partners for the education system in East Sussex:

‘...that by 2030 all children and young people in East Sussex will be a part of an excellent, inclusive, and equitable education system. This system will foster a meaningful sense of belonging from early years all the way to post-16 provision.

Our inclusive system will be driven by outstanding leadership and scaffolded by good governance. Young people and their families will feel confident, cared for and ready to reach their full potential.

The principles set out in this vision will inform the strategic plans across our partnerships, the local authority, and our education providers. Our strong governance structures will oversee the delivery of our plans and our vision.’

## Admission arrangements

All schools must have admission arrangements that explain how children will be admitted. This includes the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements are determined by admissions authorities. East Sussex County Council is the admissions authority for community schools and voluntary controlled schools. The governing boards of voluntary aided schools, foundation trust schools, academies and free schools set the admissions criteria for their individual school(s).

Parents and carers have the right to express a preference for a school. This is not the same as choosing the school where their child will attend. Parents and carers in East Sussex can select up to three preferences when applying for a school place for their child.

For September 2025, the local authority was able to offer a place at a preferred school to:

- 98.1% of primary reception (Year R) applicants
- all junior Year 3 applicants
- 96.5% of secondary Year 7 applicants

There is more information about [applying for a school place](#) on the local authority website.

## Small Schools Policy

East Sussex has a variety of schools which differ in size and location. Small primary schools, particularly in rural areas, are a key feature of the East Sussex education landscape. In 2024/25, 48 primary schools had fewer than 150 pupils on roll and were

considered small schools. 28 (56%) of these are currently working as part of a federation of schools.

Small schools offer many strengths in serving their local community. Relationships are strong, and pupils are well-known by staff and their peers. However, their small size and capacity means that it can be more difficult to overcome challenges, for example, staffing changes, falling pupil numbers and limited resources.

The [Small Schools Policy](#) is part of the local authority's strategy to help small schools remain sustainable and at the heart of their communities.

## Childcare Sufficiency Duty

The [Childcare Sufficiency Duty](#) is a statutory annual report published by the local authority. It reports on the sufficiency of childcare and the state of the childcare market across East Sussex. We have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare for eligible families of children aged 0-14, and up to 18 for disabled children.

A new Childcare Sufficiency Duty report for 2026/27 will be published in early 2026. It will take account of the expansion of the [Early Years Education entitlement](#) for working families. This expansion was fully implemented from September 2025.

## East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy

In November 2022 a new, ambitious [East Sussex SEND Strategy](#) was launched covering the period 2022 to 2026. This sets out the shared ambitions we aim to achieve across education, health, and social care over the next three years for children and young people with SEND.

The Strategy outlines a joint approach to service provision and commissioning by putting children and young people, and their families at the centre of decision-making.

The SEND Strategy was developed by representatives from across the local authority, health services and education providers, informed by the voices of young people, parents and carers.

## National framework

For more information about the national framework within which local authorities must work in relation to education provision and school planning, please refer to the [Department for Education website](#).

# The local perspective

## Population

The overall population in East Sussex has grown steadily, rising from 492,000 in 2001 to 555,000 in 2023 (Source: 2001 Census and ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2023).

Around three quarters of the population live in urban areas (Source: 2011 Census). The main centres of population and employment are concentrated in the southern coastal strip of the county in Eastbourne, Hastings and St Leonard's, Bexhill, Newhaven, Seaford, and Lewes.

The picture for East Sussex as a whole is of an ageing county. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is forecast to rise from 26% in 2021 to 30% in 2029 and 34% by 2037 (Source: 2021 Census and ESCC Dwelling-Led Population Projections May 2025).

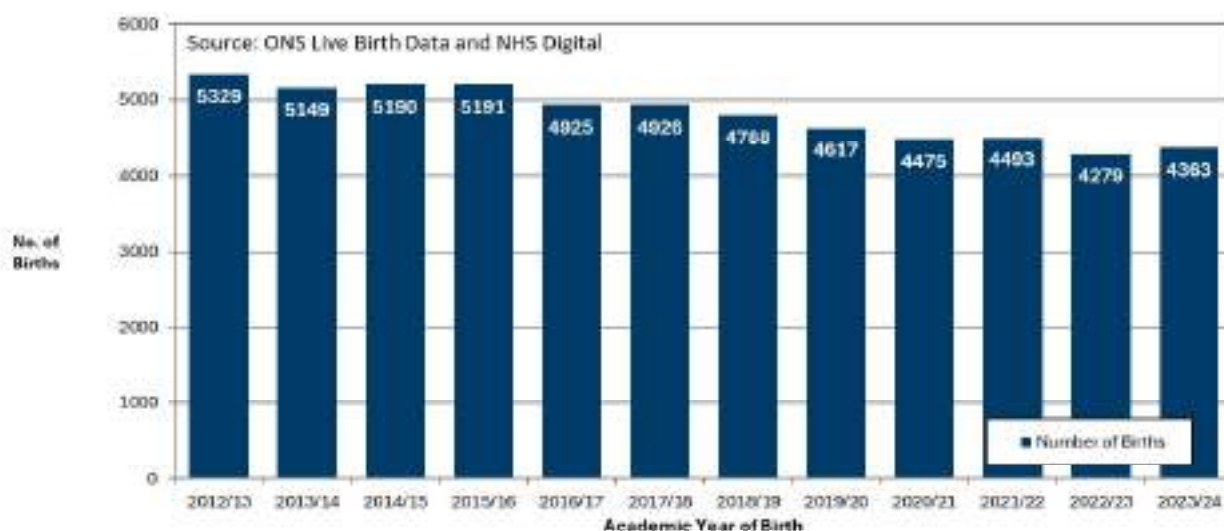
Births in East Sussex peaked at 5,500 in academic year 2010/11. Since then, countywide births have fallen to below 4,300 in 2022/23. Based on historic patterns of 11-13 year cycles of peaks and troughs, birth numbers may begin an upward cycle soon. However, the declining fertility rates currently being witnessed not only in East Sussex, but in most of the UK and in many parts of the world, may mean that previous cyclical patterns are not repeated. Births in East Sussex for 2023/24 are around 80 up on the previous year, but it is not clear whether this is just a blip or marks the start of a prolonged recovery.

**East Sussex births from 2012/13 to 2023/24**

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	5329
2013/14	5149
2014/15	5190
2015/16	5191
2016/17	4925
2017/18	4926
2018/19	4788
2019/20	4617
2020/21	4475
2021/22	4493
2022/23	4279
2023/24	4363

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### East Sussex births



## Pupil numbers

### Primary

The fall in countywide births is reflected in falling primary reception (Year R) intake numbers, at least until 2027/28. The local authority's latest pupil forecasts are showing numbers beginning to recover beyond this point. However, intake forecasts beyond 2028/29 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data and are less certain. Even if births do continue to follow their normal cyclical patterns, we may not see high Year R numbers across the county generally until the 2030s.

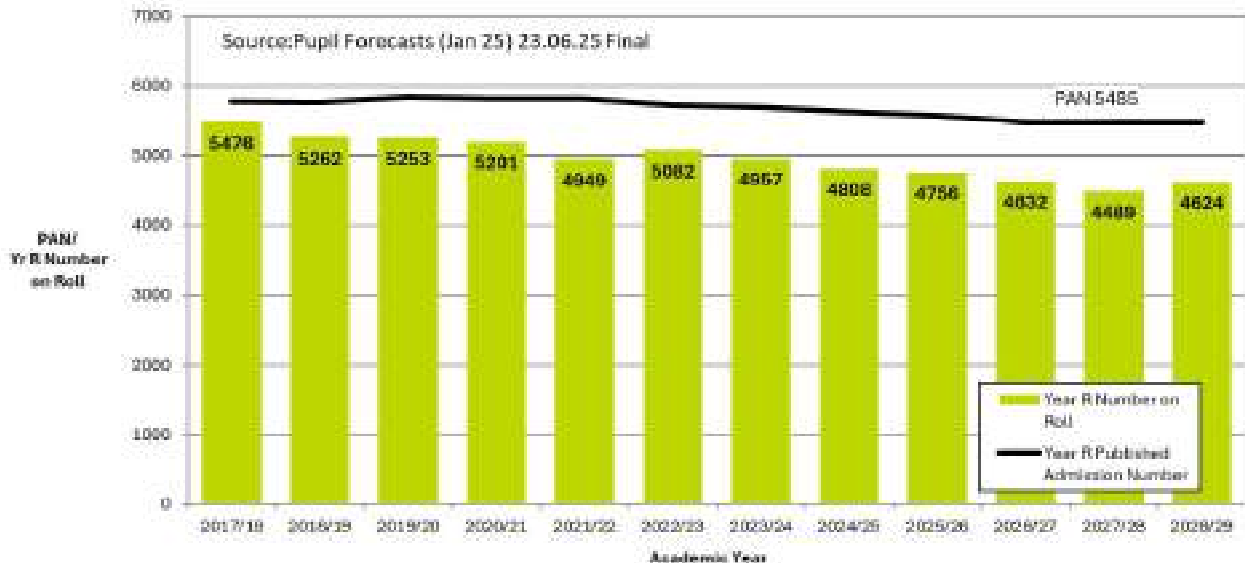
However, in some areas of the county where high volumes of new housing are planned, numbers in Year R may rise sooner than in other parts of East Sussex.

#### East Sussex primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	5775	5476
2018/19	5766	5262
2019/20	5840	5253
2020/21	5813	5201
2021/22	5813	4949
2022/23	5725	5082
2023/24	5695	4957
2024/25	5635	4808
2025/26	5575	4756
2026/27	5485	4632
2027/28	5485	4489
2028/29	5485	4624

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### East Sussex primary Year R numbers



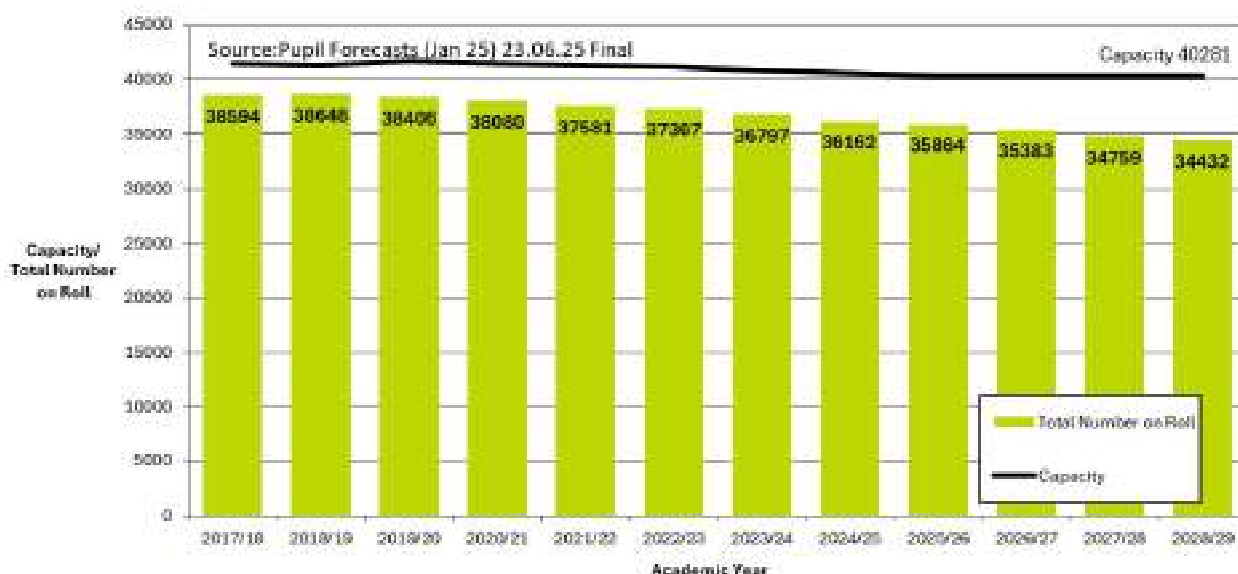
Total numbers on roll in primary schools peaked in 2018/19 and are now in decline, currently leaving around 11% surplus places overall, although this margin varies from area to area. By 2028/29, surplus places are forecast to rise to 15%.

### East Sussex total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	41516	38594	2922	7%
2018/19	41363	38648	2715	7%
2019/20	41741	38406	3335	8%
2020/21	41537	38080	3457	8%
2021/22	41327	37581	3746	9%
2022/23	41191	37367	3824	9%
2023/24	40831	36797	4034	10%
2024/25	40531	36162	4369	11%
2025/26	40311	35864	4447	11%
2026/27	40311	35383	4928	12%
2027/28	40281	34759	5522	14%
2028/29	40281	34432	5849	15%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan25) 23.06.25 Final

### East Sussex total primary numbers



## Secondary

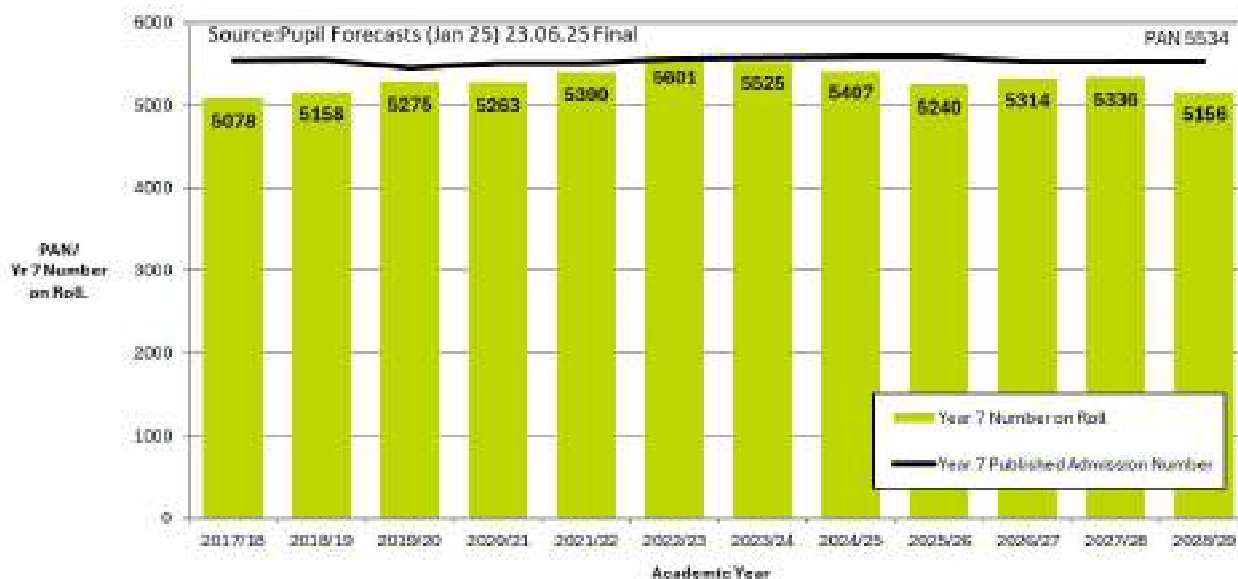
Earlier high numbers in primary schools have been reflected in rising Year 7 secondary school intakes. Year 7 numbers peaked in 2022/23 with total numbers on roll in secondary schools peaking in 2023/24.

### East Sussex secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	5548	5078
2018/19	5556	5158
2019/20	5457	5275
2020/21	5507	5263
2021/22	5507	5390
2022/23	5571	5601
2023/24	5581	5525
2024/25	5588	5407
2025/26	5594	5240
2026/27	5534	5314
2027/28	5534	5336
2028/29	5534	5156

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### East Sussex secondary Year 7 numbers



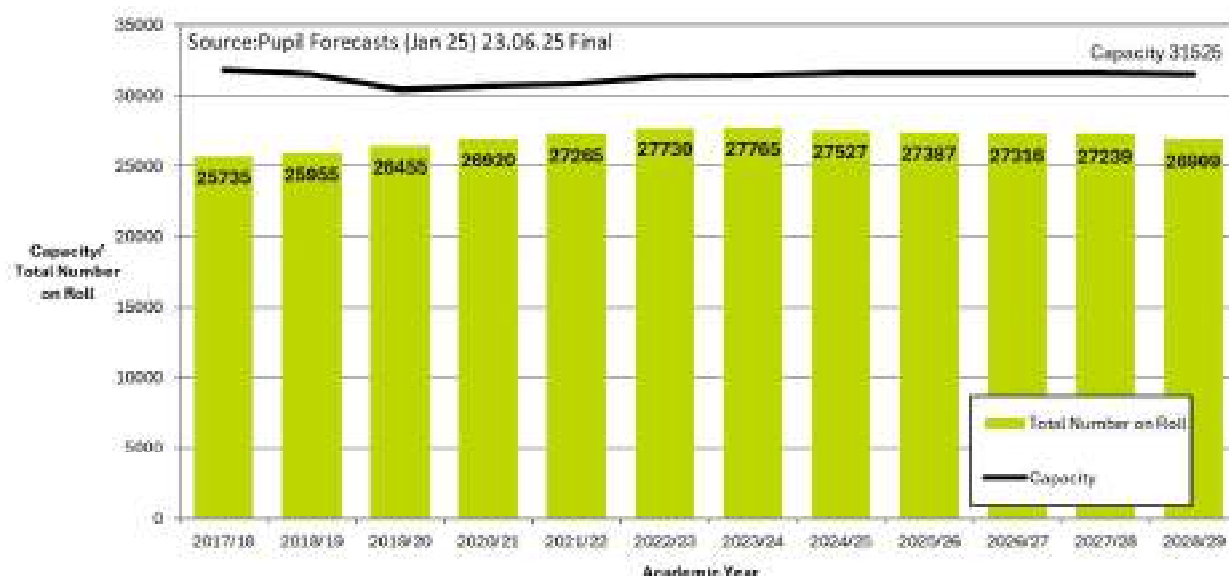
With secondary school numbers now in decline, surplus places, currently at 13% countywide, are predicted to rise to 15% by the end of the plan period.

### East Sussex total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	31815	25735	6080	19%
2018/19	31535	25955	5580	18%
2019/20	30410	26455	3955	13%
2020/21	30730	26920	3810	12%
2021/22	30860	27265	3595	12%
2022/23	31340	27730	3610	12%
2023/24	31440	27765	3675	12%
2024/25	31545	27527	4018	13%
2025/26	31575	27387	4188	13%
2026/27	31575	27316	4259	13%
2027/28	31575	27239	4336	14%
2028/29	31525	26909	4616	15%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### East Sussex total secondary numbers



## Special Educational Needs

In 2024/25, the number of school aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 4,481. There were also 412 young people aged 19-25 with an EHCP who need continued support to transition to adulthood.

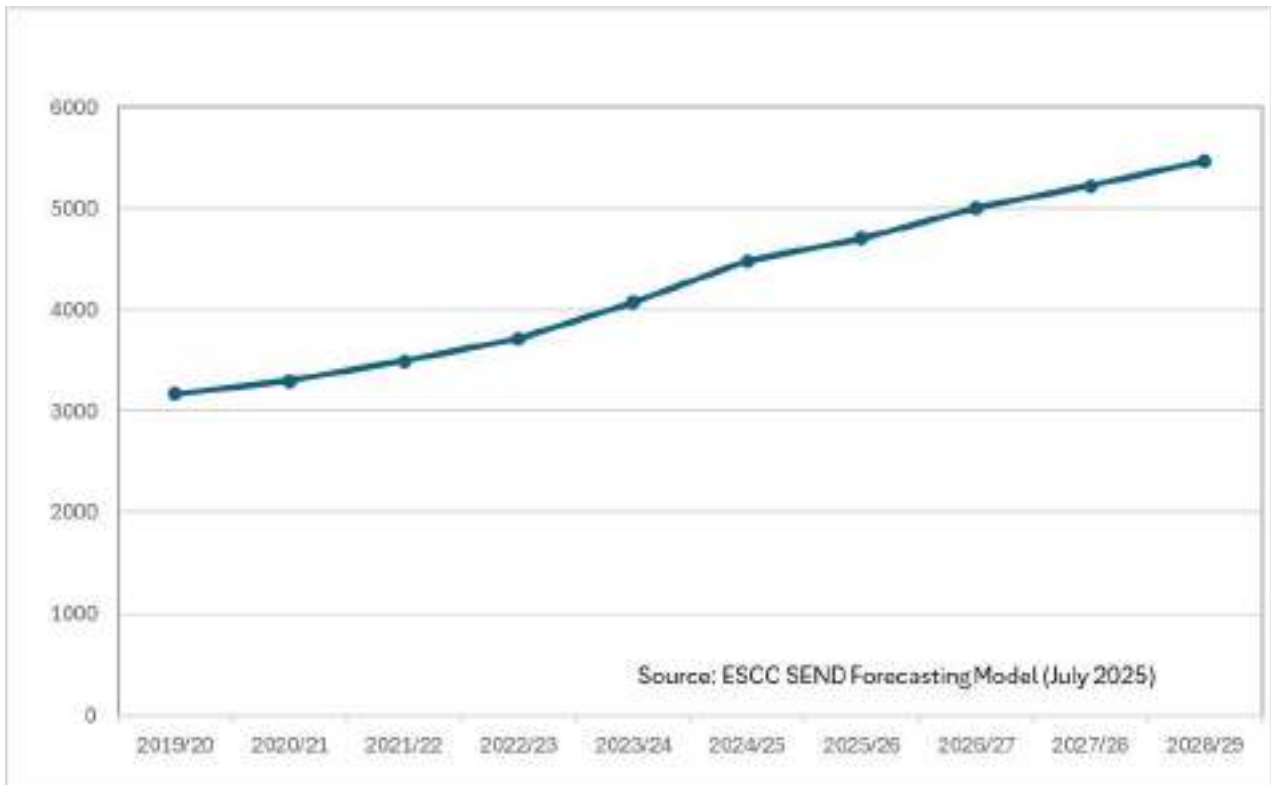
Over the next four years, the local authority forecasts that overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs will grow, by around 22%, to nearly 5,500.

### School age children with an Education, Health and Care Plan from 2019/20 to 2028/29

Academic year	EHCPs
2019/20	3170
2020/21	3297
2021/22	3494
2022/23	3713
2023/24	4073
2024/25	4481
2025/26	4708
2026/27	5008
2027/28	5224
2028/29	5468

Source: ESCC SEND Forecasting Model (July 2025)

### School age children with an Education, Health and Care Plan from 2019/20 to 2028/29



## Cross-border movement

At primary school level, across all year groups, around 400 children from the neighbouring authorities of:

- Kent
- West Sussex
- Brighton and Hove

attend schools in East Sussex. Approximately 900 children from East Sussex attend schools in these same authorities.

At secondary school level, across all year groups, approximately 900 children from these neighbouring authorities attend schools in East Sussex. Around 1,400 children from East Sussex attend schools in these same authorities. Kent Grammar schools represent a particular 'pull factor' for East Sussex children.

## Schools in East Sussex

On 1 October 2025, there were 170 state funded mainstream schools, 13 special schools and two alternative provisions in East Sussex. These range from local authority-maintained schools to academies and free schools. The following table provides a breakdown of the different types of school in East Sussex.

## State funded schools by type

School Type	Community	Voluntary Controlled	Voluntary Aided	Foundation	Academy (including free school)	Totals
Infant (4-7)	2				4	6
Junior (7-11)					5	5
Primary (4-11)	31	38	16	1	47	133
All-through (4-16/18)					3	3
Secondary (11-16/18)	5			1	17	23
Special					13	13
Alternative provision					2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>185</b>

### Note:

Some primary and all-through schools include nursery provision and therefore have age ranges starting at 0, 2 or 3.

Some all-through and secondary schools include sixth form provision and therefore have age ranges to 18.

## Local Authority maintained schools

There are 94 local authority-maintained schools in East Sussex (51% of all schools). Of these, 38 are community schools, 38 are voluntary controlled church schools, 16 are voluntary aided church schools and two are foundation schools. Of the 55 church schools, 49 are Church of England, 4 are Catholic and one is Methodist.

In the 2024/25 academic year, 39% (25,574) of pupils in East Sussex were on roll in a local authority-maintained school.

## Federations

A federation is a formal structure between two or more local authority-maintained schools. A federation has one governing board that is accountable for all schools in the federation. The schools retain their separate legal status. They have their own budget allocations, individual admissions, performance tables and Ofsted inspections. Federation brings the opportunity to secure strong strategic leadership across schools.

There are currently 12 formal school federations in East Sussex made up of 34 primary schools. In the 2024/25 academic year, 22% (3,714) of pupils in East Sussex maintained primary schools were on roll in a school that is in a federation.

## Rural Primary Schools

According to the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2024, 67% (59) of the local authority-maintained primary schools (including infant and junior schools) in East Sussex are classified as rural, reflecting the largely rural nature of the county. A small number of academies are also in rural locations.

## Academies

Under the Academies Act 2010 it is possible for all maintained schools to become academies. All new schools that have opened in East Sussex since 2010 have been established as academies (free schools) in line with government policy. The local authority has a duty to facilitate academy conversions, as set out in the Academies Act 2010, 5b: 'Where an Academy order under section 4(A1) or (1)(b) has effect in respect of a school, the governing body of the school and the local authority must take all reasonable steps to facilitate the conversion of the school into an Academy.'

There are currently 91 academies in East Sussex (49% of all schools). 89 academies are part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) and two are single academy trusts (SATs).

In the 2024/25 academic year, 61% (39,592) of pupils in East Sussex were on roll in an academy.

For more information on individual schools in the county please refer to [about schools in East Sussex](#) on the local authority website.

# School organisation in East Sussex

## Introduction

This chapter sets out the local authority's approach to school organisation, to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand.

The guiding principles underlying our approach are:

- To ensure that schools are of the right size and in the right location to meet local demand for places.
- To ensure that school provision is sustainable and is well placed to deliver a high-quality education that meets the needs of their local communities and makes best use of public funding.
- To support the amalgamation of linked infant and junior schools that delivers the benefit of continuous provision from early years to the end of Key Stage 2.
- To ensure any change to school organisation impacts positively on school performance and on the life chances of children and young people.
- To ensure any review of school organisation enables stakeholders to engage fully and effectively in the process.

## School planning areas

For school planning purposes, East Sussex is split into:

- 17 primary school planning areas which closely reflect school admissions areas. For the purposes of the plan, rural primary schools, which tend to be single school admission areas, have been grouped together under the headings of 'Rural Lewes', 'Rural Rother' and 'Rural Wealden' or have been linked with a nearby town.
- 17 secondary school planning areas which closely reflect school admissions areas. Many secondary school admissions areas relate to a single school. In Eastbourne, where the single school boundaries are complex and overlapping, six secondary schools (including two all-through schools) have been grouped together for school planning purposes. Three secondary schools make up the Hastings planning area. There are two secondary schools in the Havens planning area. The Bexhill planning area contains two schools, one of which (a Catholic school) has a much wider catchment area than the town.

The local authority works closely with local planning authorities in East Sussex on the production of their Local Plan documents. This planning process identifies the requirement for additional school places arising from new housing development. It is anticipated that, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements, new housing developments will contribute to the cost of providing additional school places to serve the development and, where necessary, provide land on which to build new schools.

## Pupil forecasting

In producing forecasts of future demand for primary and secondary places, we consider factors such as:

- current numbers on roll in each academic year group
- births

- trend data (e.g., on how year group numbers change as cohorts move through schools)
- parental preference
- school admissions policies
- housing growth
- existing and planned capacity
- patterns of inward and outward migration

The forecasts within this document provide a comprehensive account of predicted future trends in numbers and the areas of the county where pressures on places are most likely to occur. However, pupil forecasting is complex and, as a result, is not an exact science. For example, it is not always possible to predict changes in local demand for school places owing to swings in parental preference, changing migration patterns, revisions to planned local housing targets or school and sixth-form closures. Pupil forecasts are updated annually, and exceptions identified to manage the risk of under/over-supply of school places.

Taking account of the most recent three years of pupil forecasts, East Sussex County Council's countywide forecasts have achieved the following average levels of accuracy:

- Primary number on roll one year ahead forecast: 0.4%
- Primary number on roll three year ahead forecast: -1.6%
- Secondary number on roll one year ahead forecast: 1.7%
- Secondary number on roll three year ahead forecast: 4.4%

It is important to note that while the local authority seeks to meet parental preference for school admissions, our projections are primarily concerned with ensuring we have sufficient places in each area. Where some schools in an area are consistently oversubscribed, this may give the impression that there is a shortage of places. This may not be the case overall, if other schools in that area have capacity. The principal factor for school planning is the number of places in an area compared to the number of children requiring a place and it is this that the local authority seeks to predict and respond to.

The local authority's SEND forecasting model predicts future numbers of children with EHCPs and numbers in maintained, non-maintained and independent special schools. The forecasts take account of the following factors:

- demographic trends
- the prevalence of different types of SEND (as defined by primary need)
- current cohorts of children in each academic year group moving through the system
- recent trends in the numbers of new plans created and existing plans ceased
- professional judgement from SEND practitioners as to whether these trends are likely to continue in the future

## Creating new places

When the local authority identifies a shortfall of capacity it will consider providing additional school places, either through the temporary or permanent expansion of existing schools or through commissioning new schools.

The local authority will consult with key stakeholders when developing proposals to provide new places. When considering proposals to add new places to meet demand the local authority will take account of the following principles:

- Prioritise the expansion of good and outstanding schools.
- Consider the pattern of parental preference and local demand for places
- Consider the diversity of provision.
- Consider transport patterns to reduce travel times to schools wherever possible
- Consider safe routes to schools.
- Where there is demand for both school and early years places, the local authority will consider providing additional accommodation designed to ensure a seamless transition between nursery and reception (Year R).
- Where possible, only enlarge schools where it creates or sustains round forms of entry as the preferred model of organisation.
- Ensure value for money.

Whilst it would be desirable for every child to be educated in permanent school buildings, the local authority must be certain that there is a long-term need before we provide additional permanent school places. This is to ensure we do not add surplus capacity to the system which may then create viability issues in times of low pupil numbers. If the need is considered short term, the local authority will generally use temporary classrooms which provide a valuable and flexible resource and are an appropriate way of providing school places for a short period of time. Similarly, the local authority is cautious about removing permanent capacity when pupil numbers are low. By leaving physical capacity in place and using it for alternative purposes when numbers are low, it can be brought back into use again as pupil numbers begin to grow.

## Capital funding

The local authority receives Basic Need capital funding from the government to support the creation of primary and secondary school places. This funding is provided on a formulaic basis using information provided by the local authority to the Department for Education in the annual School Capacity return. The local authority also receives High Needs Provision Capital Allocation funding to support the delivery of new provision for children and young people with SEND.

The capital funding that the local authority receives from the government is insufficient to cover the entire capital costs of new build and expansion projects and the local authority must supplement the funding provided from other sources, including its own capital programme.

In areas where pressure on school places comes from new housing developments, the local authority will work closely with local planning authorities to secure financial contributions towards the cost of providing additional school places through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL is a charge which can be levied by local planning authorities on new development in their area. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area.

In some instances, the local authority can also secure development contributions through the negotiation of Section 106 agreements. Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between local authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations.

## Surplus places

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a school planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts.

A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

“It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools”.

This figure is deemed to give the appropriate amount of flexibility in an area and is set against the need to ensure the efficient use of resources. In practice, the number of surplus places planned for in an area will also take account of local circumstances.

In 2024/25 26 primary schools in East Sussex had 25% or more surplus places. This reflects the falling primary reception (Year R) intake numbers being seen across the county. Conversely, with secondary Year 7 intake numbers having recently peaked, only three secondary schools and one all-through school had 25% or more surplus places.

## Reviews of provision

Low pupil numbers can lead to a school facing financial challenges. The impact of these financial challenges is often more acute in small rural schools due to the characteristics of rural communities; low birth rates and in-area demand for places which can vary noticeably from one year to another. Fluctuating pupil numbers are difficult to manage and can lead to irregular class sizes and inefficient staff to pupil ratios. Smaller schools tend to have a higher proportion of their budget allocated to fixed costs than larger schools and, as such, have less flexibility to respond to cost pressures, unexpected events, and deficit recovery.

In undertaking its statutory duty, the local authority has a responsibility to consider the organisation of school places to create a sustainable network of schools across the county. In certain circumstances, rationalisation of provision can benefit schools by reducing surplus places in an area so that the remaining schools can operate more efficiently with more certainty over their pupil numbers.

To support this, the local authority regularly monitors pupil numbers in each of its school planning areas to ensure the current arrangement for the organisation of schools is appropriate.

In addition to the ongoing monitoring process, there may be times when the local authority wishes to conduct a more detailed review of a specific school(s) and/or a specific geographical area. This review could be conducted where there is significant change in circumstances that could impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of a school(s). Examples of significant change in circumstances might include:

- A recent Ofsted inspection which raises significant concern
- A school is judged to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses
- A school becomes eligible for intervention by the local authority
- A school faces significant financial challenges and is unable to create a viable recovery plan.

Any reviews of education provision the local authority undertakes and any recommendations for school re-organisation will, in part, be based on information contained in this document and in the local authority's Small Schools Policy where appropriate. Many schools in East Sussex are church schools, being voluntary controlled or voluntary aided, and therefore, the Diocese of Chichester and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton would be key partners in any review alongside a school's governing board.

Academy trusts may wish to consider the information in this document when considering the organisation of school places within their trust. If any trust is contemplating a change to their current organisation (expansion or reduction in provision) we would encourage them to contact the local authority at the outset to discuss their proposals. This will ensure that any plans align with the local authority's wider statutory duty around school places.

The following sections describe the current situation in each school planning area. They set out how we expect pupil numbers to change during the plan period and what action the local authority is planning to take to address any under or over provision of places, or any organisational change. The information is subject to revision and review as new data (for example, on live births) becomes available or local planning authorities' housing targets and trajectories are amended. We endeavour to communicate clearly with schools and local communities about current and predicted place planning pressures in their area. In general, we will only name a particular school(s) in the plan when there is certainty that a proposal will be implemented or where this is already underway.

The capacity information provided in the charts in each school planning area is based on either the local authority's net capacity assessment of each maintained school or, for academies, the capacity figure stated in each academy's funding agreement. Further information about an individual school's capacity and pupil numbers can be found in Appendix 1.

# Eastbourne

## Schools

There are 18 primary schools in the area, five of which are infant schools and four are junior schools. There are two all-through schools (primary and secondary) and four secondary schools. Six schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary schools</b>		
Bourne Primary School	3-11	Community
Heron Park Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Langney Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Motcombe Infants' School	4-7	Community
Oakwood Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
Ocklynge Junior School	7-11	Academy
Parkland Infant School	4-7	Academy
Parkland Junior School	7-11	Academy
Pashley Down Infant School	4-7	Community
Roselands Infants' School	4-7	Academy
Shinewater Primary School	3-11	Academy
St Andrew's Church of England Infants School	4-7	Academy
St John's Meads Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
St Thomas A Becket Catholic Primary School	4-11	Academy
Stafford Junior School	7-11	Academy
The Haven Church of England Methodist Primary School	4-11	Academy
Tollgate Community Junior School	7-11	Academy
West Rise Primary School	2-11	Community
<b>All-through schools</b>		
Gildredge House	4-16	Academy
The Cavendish School	2-16	Academy
<b>Secondary schools</b>		
Ratton School	11-16	Academy
St Catherine's College	11-16	Academy
The Eastbourne Academy	11-16	Academy
The Turing School	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

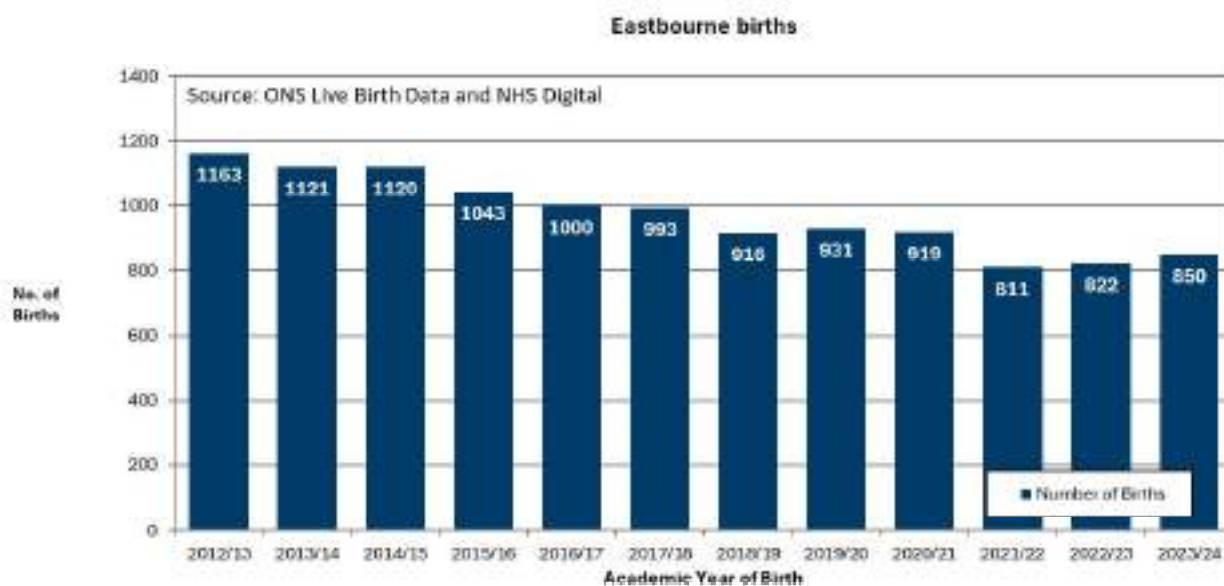
## Births

Births in Eastbourne have been falling since their peak in 2011/12. Births in 2023/24 are slightly up on 2022/23 figures, but it is not clear yet whether this signifies the start of a prolonged recovery or may be an anomaly.

### Eastbourne births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	1163
2013/14	1121
2014/15	1120
2015/16	1043
2016/17	1000
2017/18	993
2018/19	916
2019/20	931
2020/21	919
2021/22	811
2022/23	822
2023/24	850

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. 500 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period from 2025/26 to 2026/27. EBC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in Eastbourne may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

In line with the falling births in Eastbourne, the local authority anticipates reception (Year R) intakes in the area to be low at least for the remainder of the decade if not beyond.

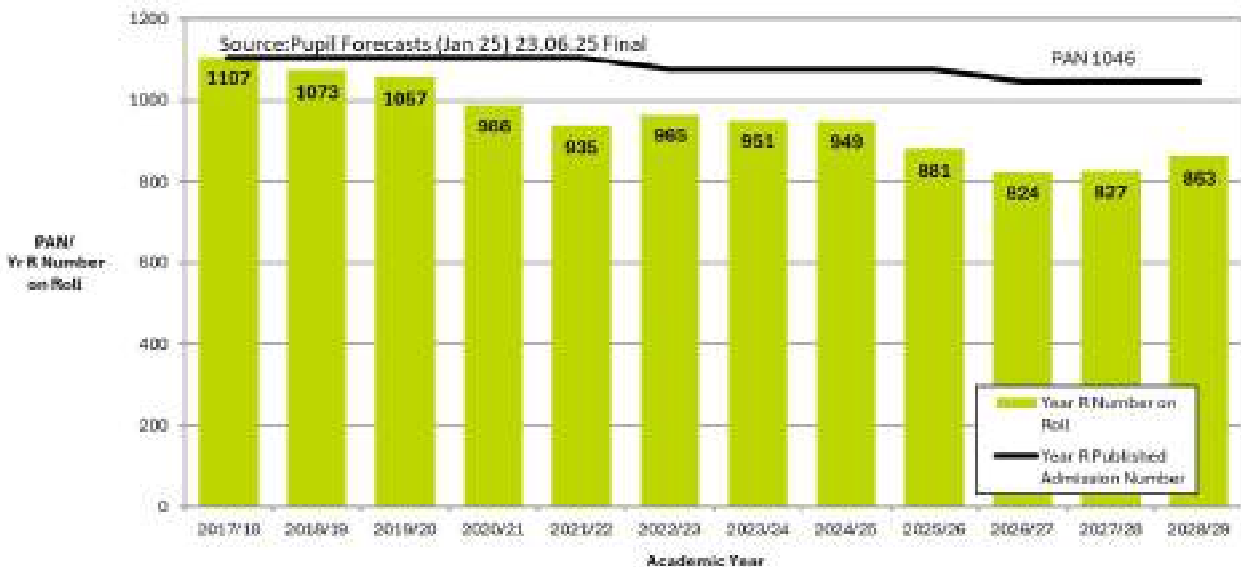
Many Eastbourne children attend schools in the surrounding area including Polegate School, Willingdon Primary School, Stone Cross School, Hankham Primary School and Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School. The majority of these schools are full or close to full. High levels of recent and planned new housing will put additional pressure on places at these schools and may result in some demand from Eastbourne children being redirected by the school admissions system back into the area.

**Eastbourne primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	1106	1107
2018/19	1106	1073
2019/20	1106	1057
2020/21	1106	988
2021/22	1106	935
2022/23	1076	965
2023/24	1076	951
2024/25	1076	949
2025/26	1076	881
2026/27	1046	824
2027/28	1046	827
2028/29	1046	863

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Eastbourne primary Year R numbers



Low intakes will have a knock-on effect on total numbers on roll. By 2028/29, surplus places for the area could have risen to 15%.

Currently, there are three schools in Eastbourne with surplus places of 25% or more.

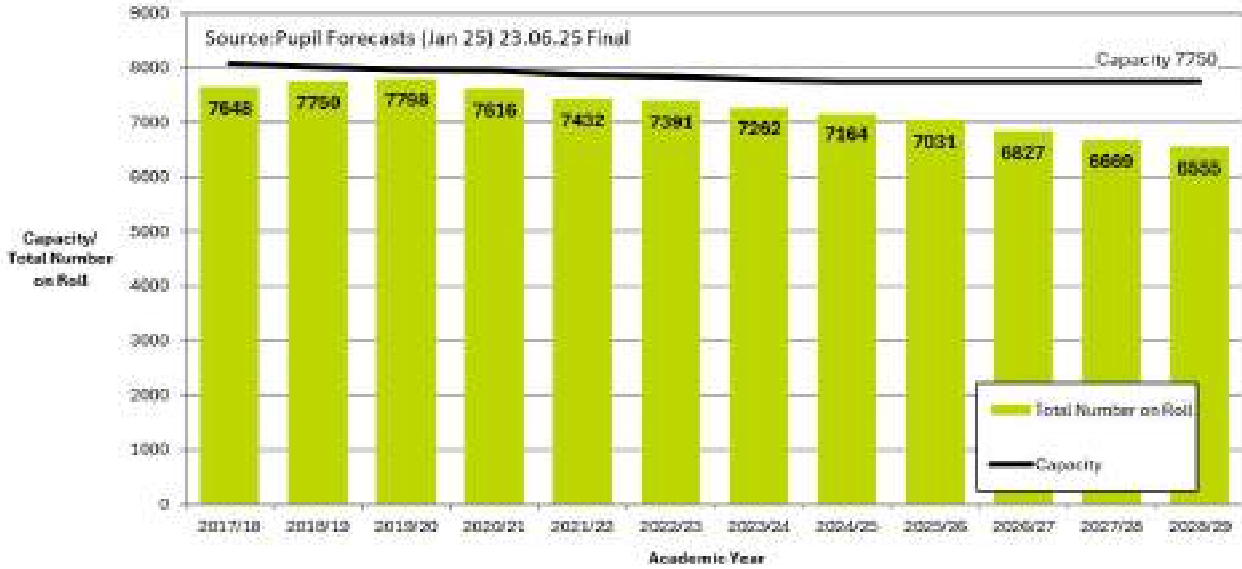
**Eastbourne total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	8072	7648	424	5%
2018/19	8012	7750	262	3%
2019/20	7960	7798	162	2%
2020/21	7930	7616	314	4%

2021/22	7870	7432	438	6%
2022/23	7840	7391	449	6%
2023/24	7780	7262	518	7%
2024/25	7750	7164	586	8%
2025/26	7750	7031	719	9%
2026/27	7750	6827	923	12%
2027/28	7750	6669	1081	14%
2028/29	7750	6555	1195	15%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Eastbourne total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

Two of the three schools with significant surplus places are academies. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with the trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

The Published Admission Number (PAN) at Motcombe Infants School will reduce from 90 to 60 with effect from the 2026/27 academic year to help manage surplus places in the school. Accommodation will not be removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers start to rise again.

On 1 May 2025, West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School amalgamated to create West Rise Primary School.

The local authority is working with Ocklynge Junior School to establish a specialist facility with a designation of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for up to 12 pupils with autism. The new facility is due to open on 1 January 2026.

Pashley Down Infant School aims to lower its age range from September 2026 to establish school-run nursery provision on site.

## Secondary places

Based on the numbers coming through primary schools, intakes into Year 7 are forecast to remain high until 2026/27. Beyond that, intake numbers are predicted to fall away.

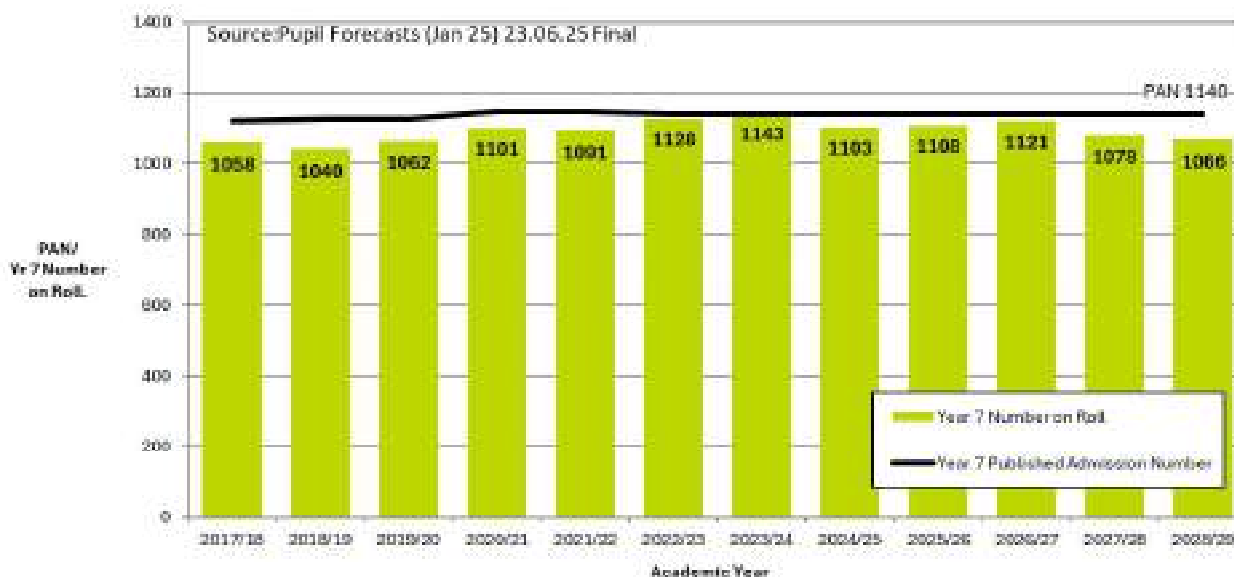
The Eastbourne area sees outflows of Catholic children to St Richard's Catholic College in Bexhill and some inflows from the Hailsham area. There are also significant inflows from and outflows to Willingdon Community School.

### Eastbourne secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	1120	1058
2018/19	1128	1040
2019/20	1128	1062
2020/21	1148	1101
2021/22	1148	1091
2022/23	1140	1128
2023/24	1140	1143
2024/25	1140	1103
2025/26	1140	1108
2026/27	1140	1121
2027/28	1140	1078
2028/29	1140	1066

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Eastbourne secondary Year 7 numbers



Overall secondary numbers are expected to peak in 2026/27 before starting to fall away. Surplus places for the area, which stood at 8% in 2024/25, are forecast to rise to 9% by 2028/29.

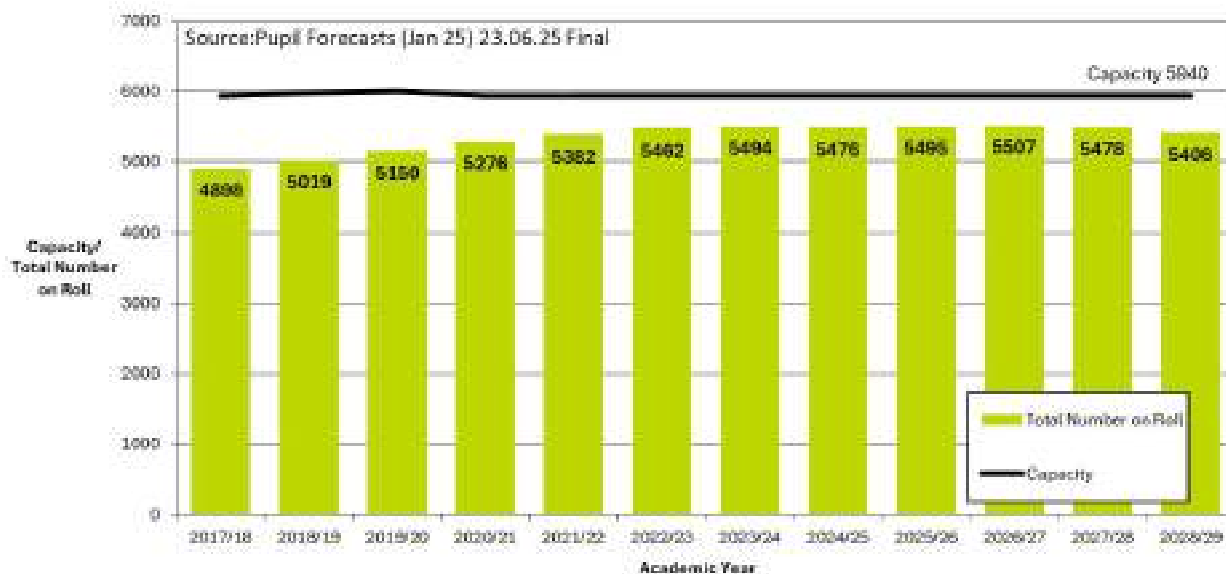
### Eastbourne total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	5940	4898	1042	18%
2018/19	5980	5019	961	16%
2019/20	6000	5150	850	14%

2020/21	5940	5276	664	11%
2021/22	5940	5382	558	9%
2022/23	5940	5462	478	8%
2023/24	5940	5494	446	8%
2024/25	5940	5476	464	8%
2025/26	5940	5495	445	7%
2026/27	5940	5507	433	7%
2027/28	5940	5478	462	8%
2028/29	5940	5406	534	9%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

#### Eastbourne total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

In May 2025, the Department for Education's Regional Director for the South East approved the transfer of The Eastbourne Academy from Swale Academies Trust to the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust. The date of transfer will be confirmed in due course.

# Hastings

## Schools

There are 18 primary schools in the area and three secondary schools. Of the 18 primary schools, one is an infant school, and one is a junior school. Nine of the primary schools have nursery provision. One secondary school has sixth form provision.

School name	Age range	School type
<b>Primary</b>		
All Saints CE Junior Academy	7-11	Academy
ARK Blacklands Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
ARK Castledown Primary School	2-11	Academy
ARK Little Ridge Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Christ Church CE Primary and Nursery Academy	2-11	Academy
Churchwood Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Dudley Infant Academy	4-7	Academy
Hollington Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Ore Village Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
Robsack Wood Primary Academy	0-11	Academy
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Sandown Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Community
Silverdale Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Leonard's Church of England Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School	4-11	Academy
St Paul's Church of England Academy	2-11	Academy
The Baird Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
West St Leonards Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
<b>Secondary</b>		
ARK Alexandra Academy	11-16	Academy
The Hastings Academy	11-16	Academy
The St Leonard's Academy	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

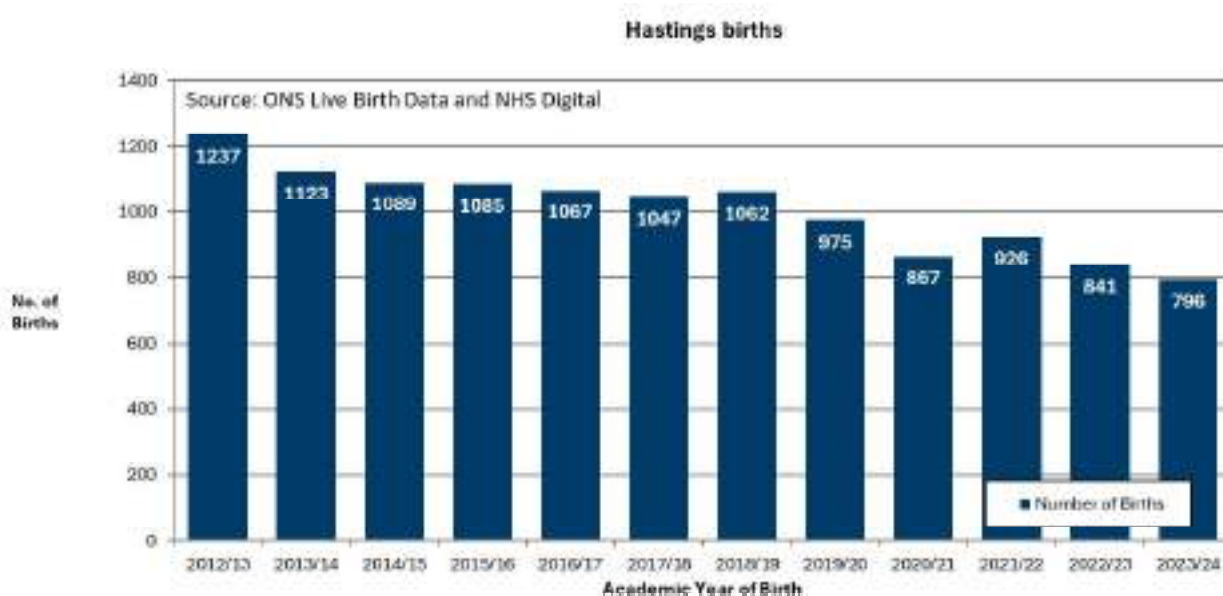
## Births

Since their peak in 2010/11, births in Hastings have continued to fall.

### Hastings births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	1237
2013/14	1123
2014/15	1089
2015/16	1085
2016/17	1067
2017/18	1047
2018/19	1062
2019/20	975
2020/21	867
2021/22	926
2022/23	841
2023/24	796

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Hastings Borough Council (HBC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. HBC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 2,300 new dwellings being built in the period 2025/26 to 2040/41.

## Primary places

In line with falling births, reception (Year R) intake numbers in the area are forecast to remain well below the current Published Admission Number (PAN) until late in the decade and probably beyond.

Many Hastings children attend surrounding primary schools including Battle and Langton CE Primary School, Crowhurst CE Primary School, Guestling Bradshaw CE Primary School,

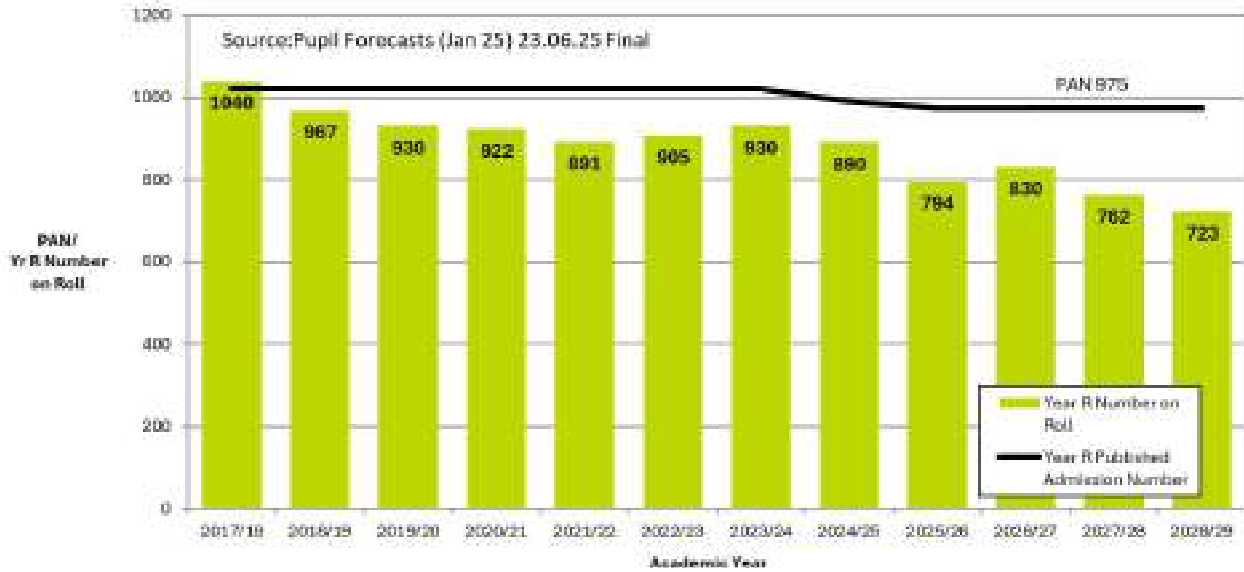
Icklesham CE Primary School, Sedlescombe CE Primary School, and Westfield School. Most of these have historically been full or close to full. However, going forward, lower levels of demand from Hastings may see numbers in some of these surrounding schools falling.

**Hastings primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	1020	1040
2018/19	1020	967
2019/20	1020	930
2020/21	1020	922
2021/22	1020	891
2022/23	1020	905
2023/24	1020	930
2024/25	990	890
2025/26	975	794
2026/27	975	830
2027/28	975	762
2028/29	975	723

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Hastings primary Year R numbers



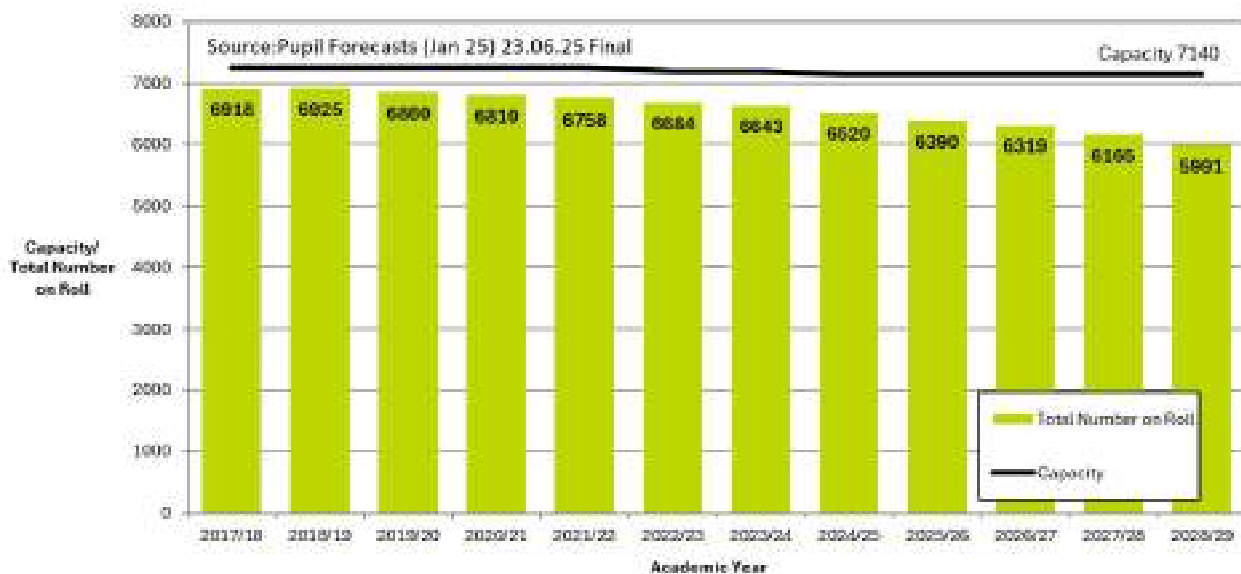
Lower intakes are predicted to result in higher numbers of surplus places in the area. By 2028/29, surplus places for the area could have risen to 16%.

## Hastings total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	7260	6918	342	5%
2018/19	7260	6925	335	5%
2019/20	7260	6860	400	6%
2020/21	7260	6810	450	6%
2021/22	7260	6758	502	7%
2022/23	7200	6684	516	7%
2023/24	7200	6643	557	8%
2024/25	7140	6520	620	9%
2025/26	7140	6390	750	10%
2026/27	7140	6319	821	11%
2027/28	7140	6165	975	14%
2028/29	7140	5991	1149	16%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Hastings total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

Currently, there are three schools in the town with 25% or more surplus places, all of which are academies. Hollington Primary Academy reduced its PAN from 60 to 30 in 2024/25 and The Baird Primary Academy's PAN reduces from 60 to 45 with effect from 2025/26. Accommodation has not been removed from either school and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers begin to rise again.

## Secondary places

Year 7 intakes in the area peaked in 2022/23 and the subsequent trend is forecast to be generally downward.

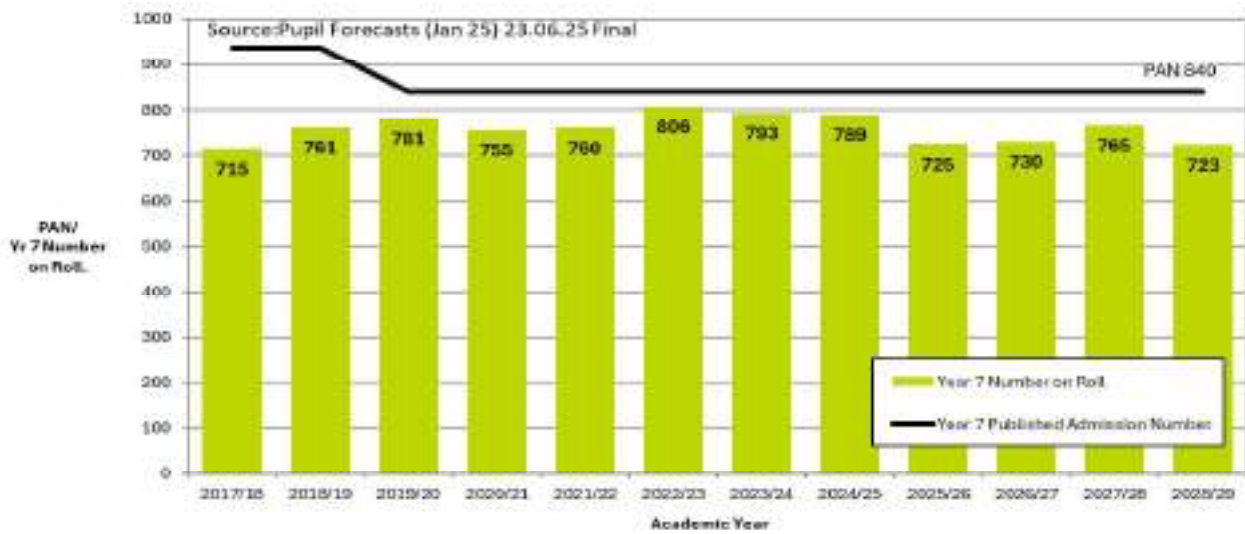
Significant numbers of Hastings children seek places in surrounding schools such as Bexhill High Academy, St Richard's Catholic College, Claverham Community College, Rye College, and Robertsbridge Community College.

## Hastings secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	936	715
2018/19	936	761
2019/20	840	781
2020/21	840	755
2021/22	840	760
2022/23	840	806
2023/24	840	793
2024/25	840	789
2025/26	840	725
2026/27	840	730
2027/28	840	765
2028/29	840	723

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Hastings secondary Year 7 numbers



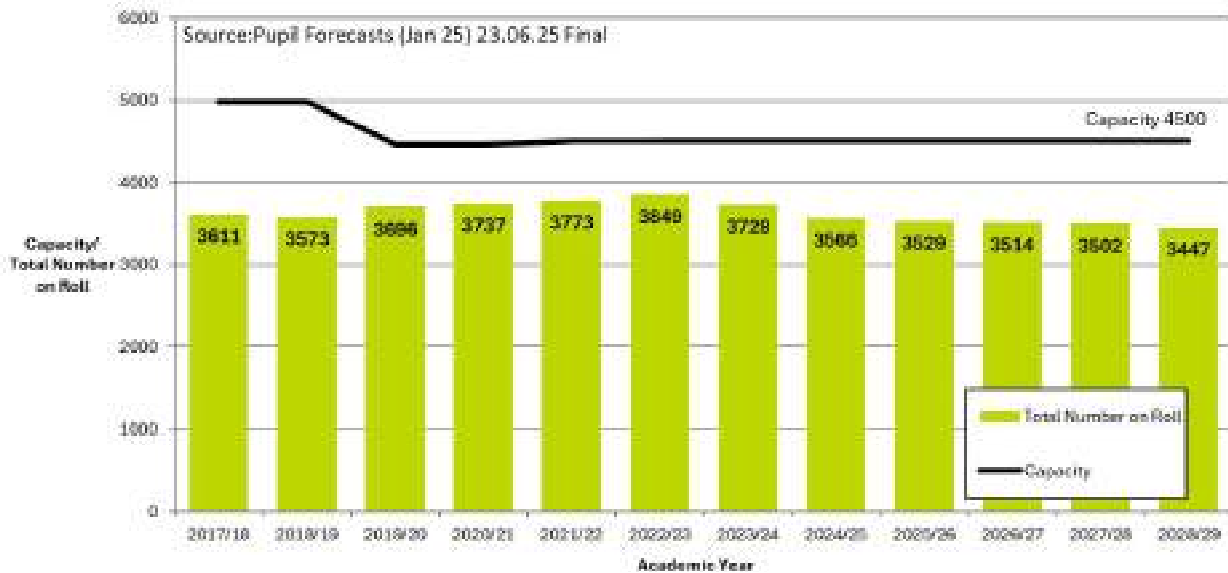
Surplus places in Hastings stood at 21% in 2024/25 and are forecast to rise to 23% by 2028/29.

### Hastings total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	4980	3611	1369	27%
2018/19	4980	3573	1407	28%
2019/20	4450	3696	754	17%
2020/21	4450	3737	713	16%
2021/22	4450	3773	727	16%
2022/23	4500	3849	651	14%
2023/24	4500	3728	772	17%
2024/25	4500	3566	934	21%
2025/26	4500	3529	971	22%
2026/27	4500	3514	986	22%
2027/28	4500	3502	998	22%
2028/29	4500	3447	1053	23%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Hastings total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

One school in the area currently has 25% or more surplus places. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

Following a decision in early 2025 by trustees at the University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT) to close the trust, the six primary and two secondary UBAT schools in Hastings will transfer to new trusts during the 2025/26 academic year. The date of transfer will be confirmed in due course.

# Lewes and surrounding area

## Schools

There are five primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Two primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Iford and Kingston Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
South Malling CE Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Controlled
Southover CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Wallands Community Primary and Nursery School	3-11	Community
Western Road Community Primary School	4-11	Foundation
<b>Secondary</b>		
Priory School	11-16	Foundation

\* School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

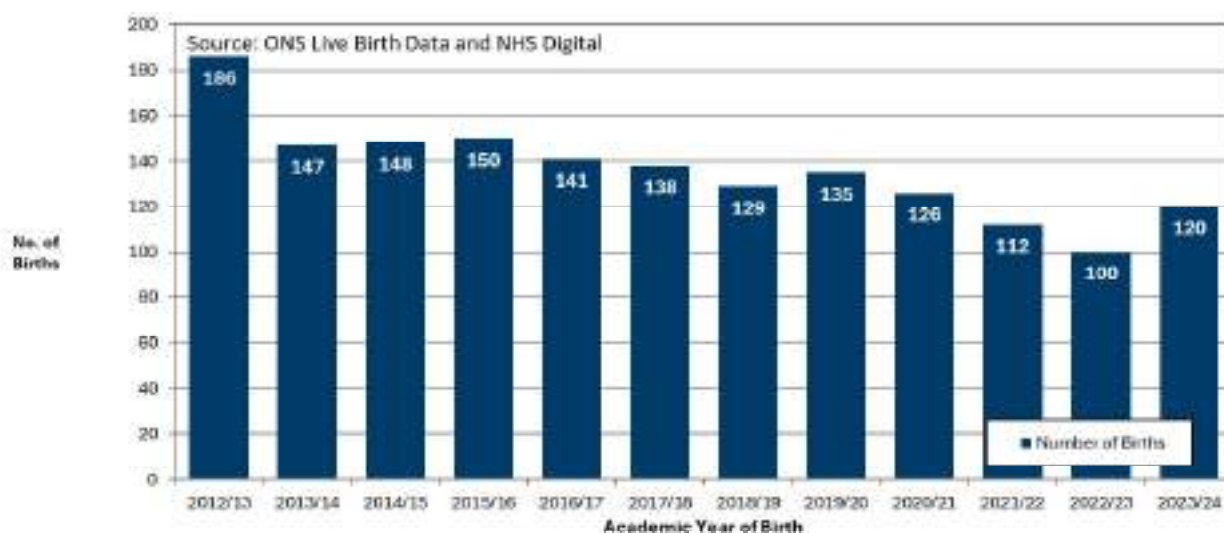
Following a period of falling births, numbers in 2023/24 are up on 2022/23 figures. However, it is not clear yet whether this signifies the start of a prolonged recovery or may be an anomaly.

### Lewes births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	186
2013/14	147
2014/15	148
2015/16	150
2016/17	141
2017/18	138
2018/19	129
2019/20	135
2020/21	126
2021/22	112
2022/23	100
2023/24	120

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Lewes and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 900 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2032/33. The SDNPA is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

In 2025/26, the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the area is insufficient to meet demand for reception (Year R) places. For the remainder of the plan period, shortfalls are not currently forecast.

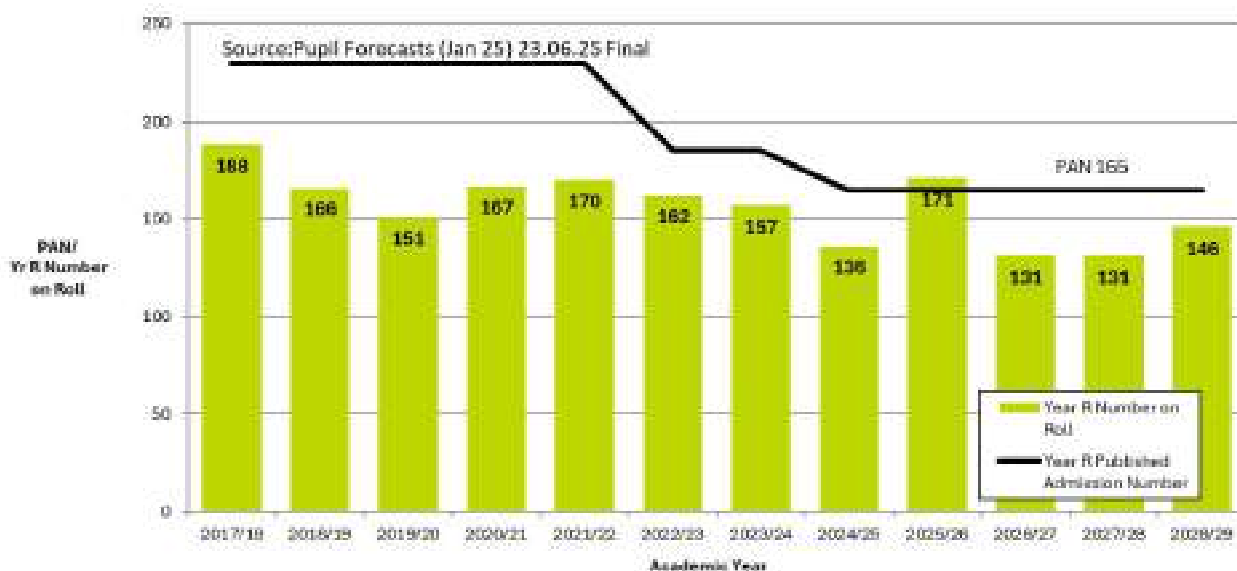
Some children from Lewes take up places in surrounding rural schools, notably Hamsey Community Primary School. Iford and Kingston CE Primary School experiences significant inflows of children from Newhaven.

## Lewes and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	230	188
2018/19	230	166
2019/20	230	151
2020/21	230	167
2021/22	230	170
2022/23	185	162
2023/24	185	157
2024/25	165	136
2025/26	165	171
2026/27	165	131
2027/28	165	131
2028/29	165	146

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Lewes and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



To meet the shortfall of Year R places in 2025/26, Wallands Community Primary School admitted numbers above its PAN of 30, utilising spare accommodation from its previous reduction in PAN.

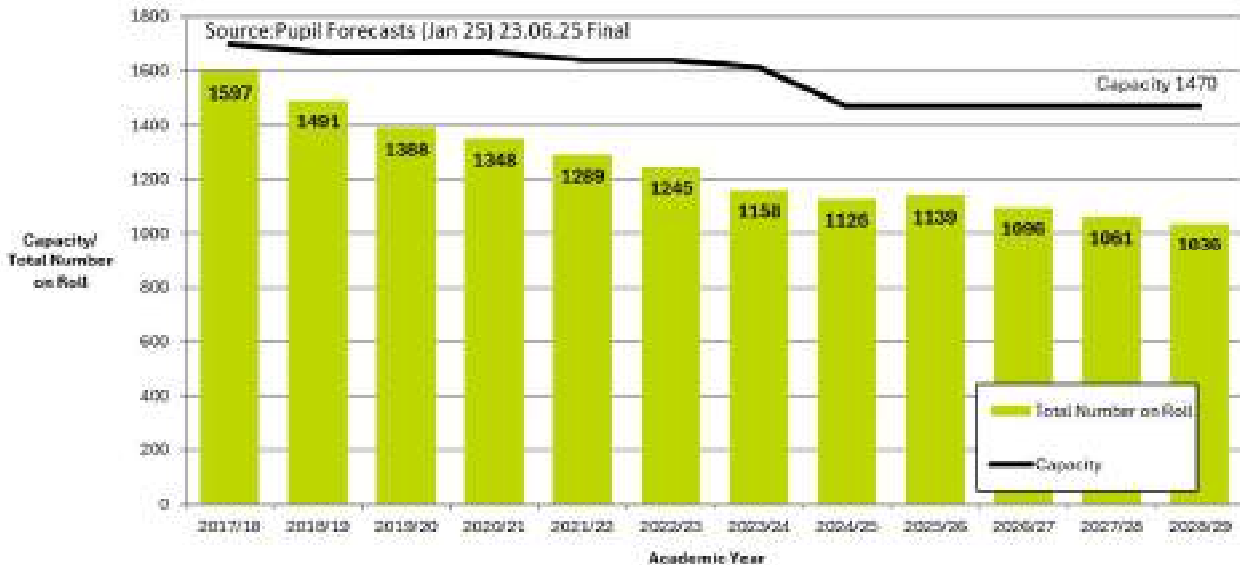
Lower intakes have led to higher numbers of surplus places in the area. By 2028/29, surplus places could have risen to 30%.

Lewes and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1700	1597	103	6%
2018/19	1670	1491	179	11%
2019/20	1670	1388	282	17%
2020/21	1670	1348	322	19%
2021/22	1640	1289	351	21%
2022/23	1640	1245	395	24%
2023/24	1610	1158	452	28%
2024/25	1470	1126	344	23%
2025/26	1470	1139	331	23%
2026/27	1470	1096	374	25%
2027/28	1470	1061	409	28%
2028/29	1470	1036	434	30%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Lewes and surrounding area total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

If the 600 new homes planned in the area for the period to 2029/30 are built according to schedule, and this is coupled with a general upswing in births, the reduced number of Year R places may not be sufficient to meet demand in the medium to longer term. If this is the case, the accommodation which remains at Southover CE Primary School and Wallands Community Primary School following their PAN reductions, can be brought back into use to increase the number of places.

## Secondary places

Part of Priory School’s admissions area is a joint admissions area with that of King’s Academy Ringmer.

There is routinely significant pupil movement in and out between the Priory School area and notably Kings Academy Ringmer, Chailey School, the Havens area and neighbouring Brighton and Hove.

Although the village of Ditchling is in a joint admissions area served by Priory School and Chailey School, it is also in the admissions area of Downlands Community School in Hassocks, West Sussex. Traditionally, children from the village have attended Downlands Community School, which is their nearest school.

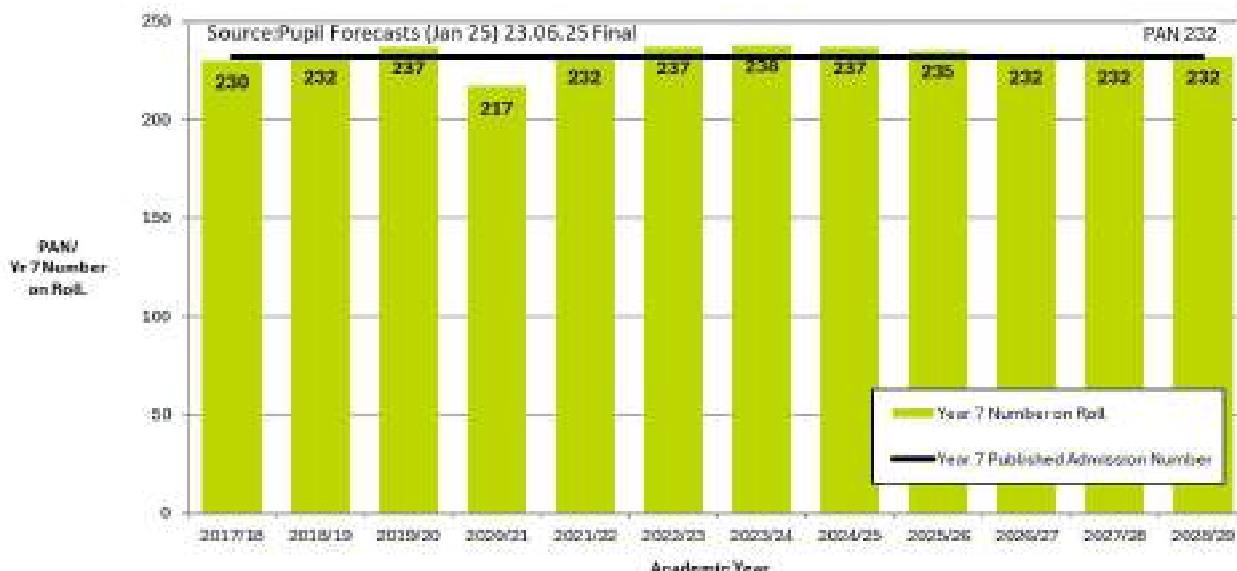
Priory School slightly exceeded its PAN of 232 in 2024/25 and is likely to do so again in 2025/26. This was as a result of the school allocating extra places to cater for demand from out of area. Future Year 7 numbers at the school will continue to depend heavily on demand from out of area, particularly from Brighton and Hove and The Havens area, bridging the gap between the demand from local children and its PAN. Recent preference patterns indicate that in the coming years this out of area demand will largely be able to fill this gap.

**Lewes and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	232	230
2018/19	232	232
2019/20	232	237
2020/21	232	217
2021/22	232	232
2022/23	232	237
2023/24	232	238
2024/25	232	237
2025/26	232	235
2026/27	232	232
2027/28	232	232
2028/29	232	232

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Lewes and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers



Priory school is currently slightly over capacity and is expected to remain so for the plan period.

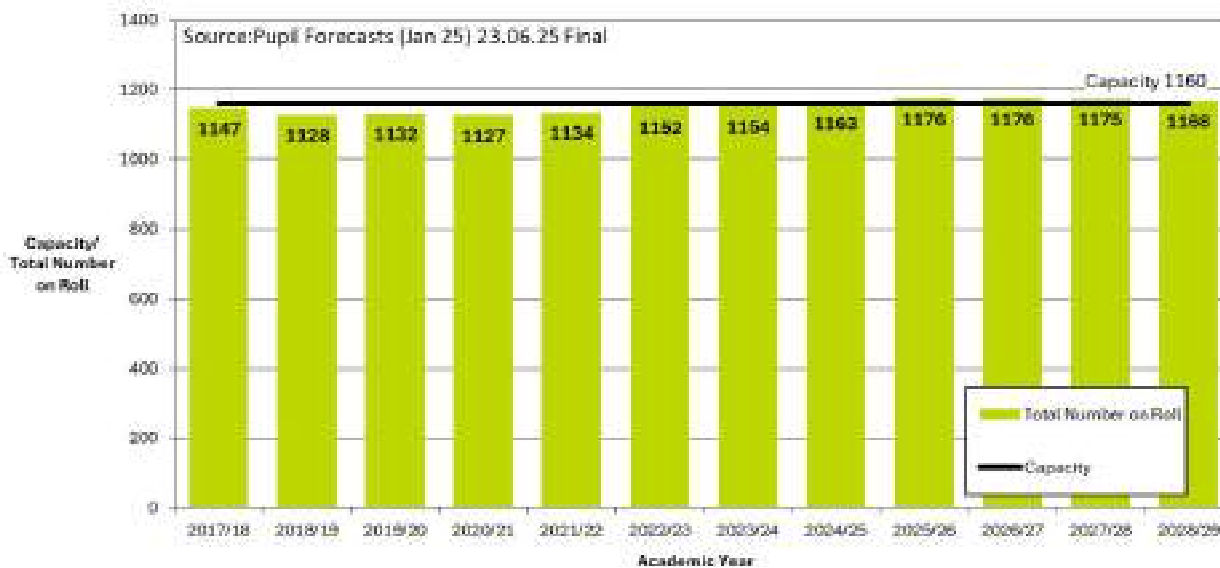
**Lewes and surrounding area total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	232	230	-2	-0.86%
2018/19	232	232	0	0%
2019/20	232	237	5	2.15%
2020/21	232	217	-15	-6.47%
2021/22	232	232	0	0%
2022/23	232	237	5	2.15%
2023/24	232	238	6	2.60%
2024/25	232	237	5	2.15%
2025/26	232	235	3	1.30%
2026/27	232	232	0	0%
2027/28	232	232	0	0%
2028/29	232	232	0	0%

2017/18	1160	1147	13	1%
2018/19	1160	1128	32	3%
2019/20	1160	1132	28	2%
2020/21	1160	1127	33	3%
2021/22	1160	1134	26	2%
2022/23	1160	1152	8	1%
2023/24	1160	1154	6	1%
2024/25	1160	1163	(3)	0%
2025/26	1160	1176	(16)	(1%)
2026/27	1160	1176	(16)	(1%)
2027/28	1160	1175	(15)	(1%)
2028/29	1160	1168	(8)	(1%)

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Lewes and surrounding area total secondary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned in the area.

# The Havens

The Havens area covers both Newhaven and Peacehaven.

## Schools

There are four primary schools in Newhaven, three of which have nursery provision. In Peacehaven, there are three primary schools, all with nursery provision. There are two secondary schools in the Havens area, one in each town.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary (Newhaven)</b>		
Breakwater Academy	4-11	Academy
Denton Community Primary School and Nursery	3-11	Community
Harbour Primary and Nursery School	2-11	Community
High Cliff Academy	3-11	Academy
<b>Primary (Peacehaven)</b>		
Meridian Community Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Community
Peacehaven Heights Academy	3-11	Academy
Telscombe Cliffs Academy	2-11	Academy
<b>Secondary</b>		
Peacehaven Community School	11-16	Academy
Seahaven Academy	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

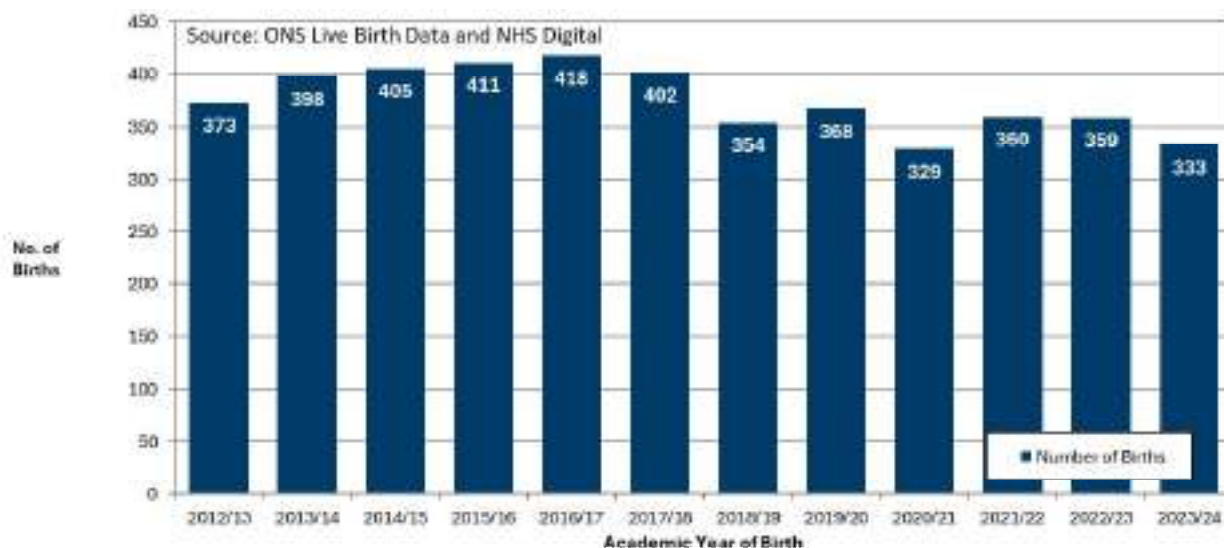
Overall, births in the Havens area continue to be low when compared to the period up to 2017/18.

### Newhaven and Peacehaven births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of Births
2012/13	373
2013/14	398
2014/15	405
2015/16	411
2016/17	418
2017/18	402
2018/19	354
2019/20	368
2020/21	329
2021/22	360
2022/23	359
2023/24	333

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Newhaven and Peacehaven Births



## Housing plans

Lewes District Council (LDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 1,200 new homes are projected to be built in the Havens area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2029/30. LDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places in Newhaven

Owing to fewer children coming into primary schools and higher than usual outflows to Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, we are currently witnessing lower reception (Year R) intake numbers than previously. Based on birth and GP registration data, and assuming current preference patterns continue, intake numbers are forecast to stay below PAN in the period to 2028/29.

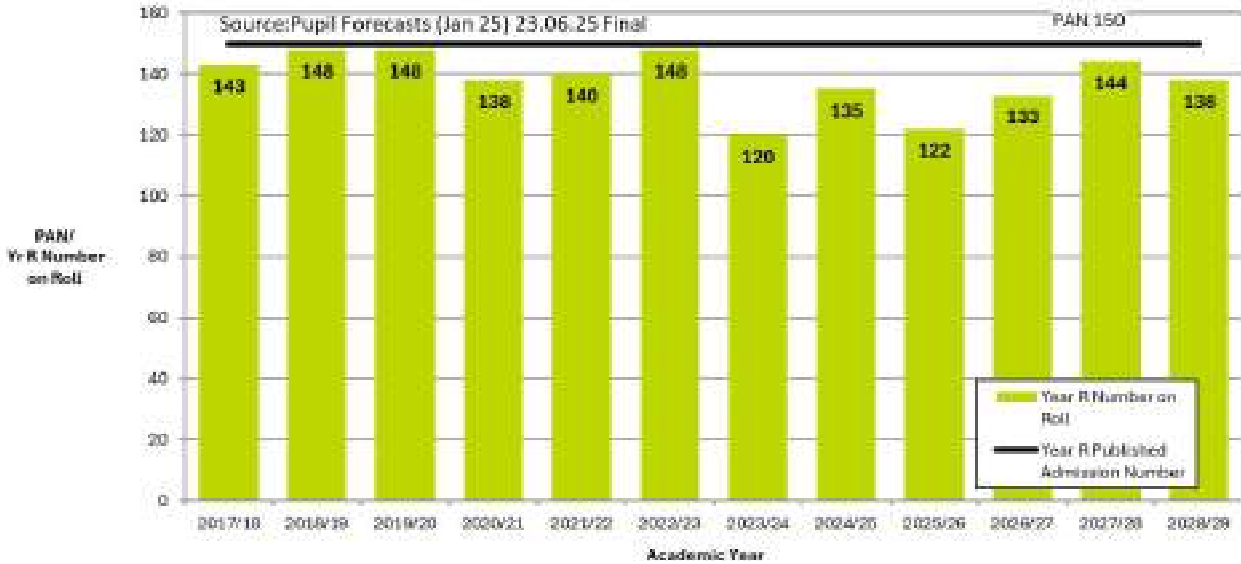
A number of Newhaven pupils attend Iford and Kingston CE Primary School and schools in Seaford.

**Newhaven primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	150	143
2018/19	150	148
2019/20	150	148
2020/21	150	138
2021/22	150	140
2022/23	150	148
2023/24	150	120
2024/25	150	135
2025/26	150	122
2026/27	150	133
2027/28	150	144
2028/29	150	138

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Newhaven primary Year R numbers**



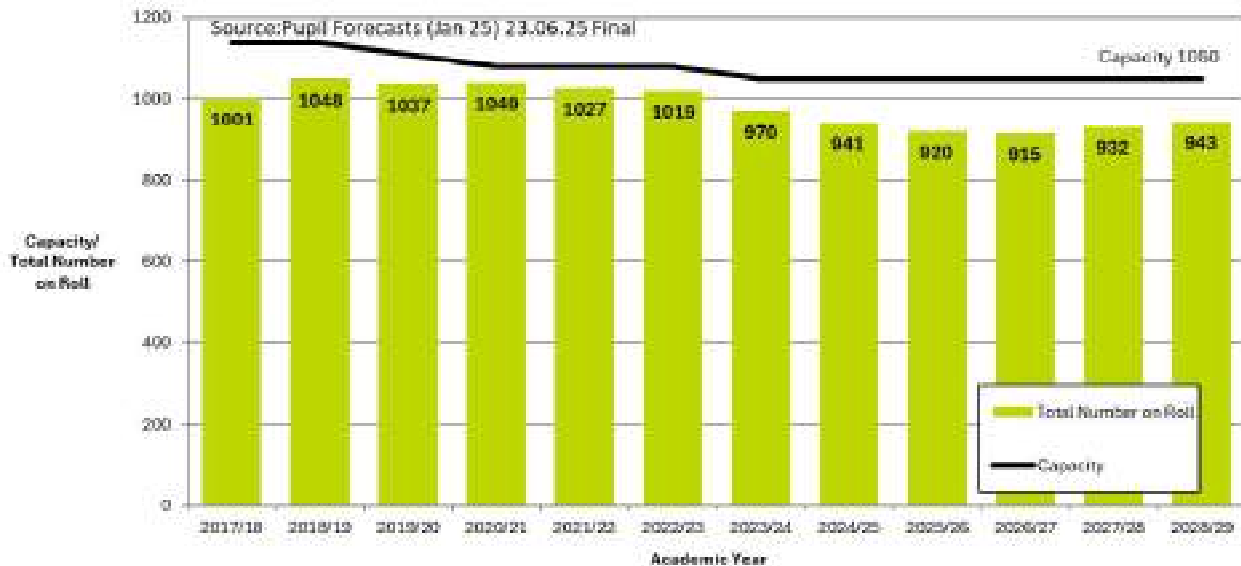
Surplus places for the area stood at 10% in 2024/25 and are forecast to be relatively static over the plan period.

## Newhaven total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1140	1001	139	12%
2018/19	1140	1048	92	8%
2019/20	1110	1037	73	7%
2020/21	1080	1040	40	4%
2021/22	1080	1027	53	5%
2022/23	1080	1019	61	6%
2023/24	1050	970	80	8%
2024/25	1050	941	109	10%
2025/26	1050	920	130	12%
2026/27	1050	915	135	13%
2027/28	1050	932	118	11%
2028/29	1050	943	107	10%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Newhaven total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

The majority of surplus places in the area are within the two academies. The two maintained schools are largely full. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with the trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

With more new homes planned in the area by 2029/30, Year R pressures could resurface in the medium to longer term.

## Primary places in Peacehaven

Live birth and GP data indicate that reception (Year R) numbers in Peacehaven are likely to be well below the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 210 for the foreseeable future.

Saltdean Primary School in neighbouring Brighton and Hove is traditionally the school of preference for children who live in East Saltdean which is on the East Sussex side of the

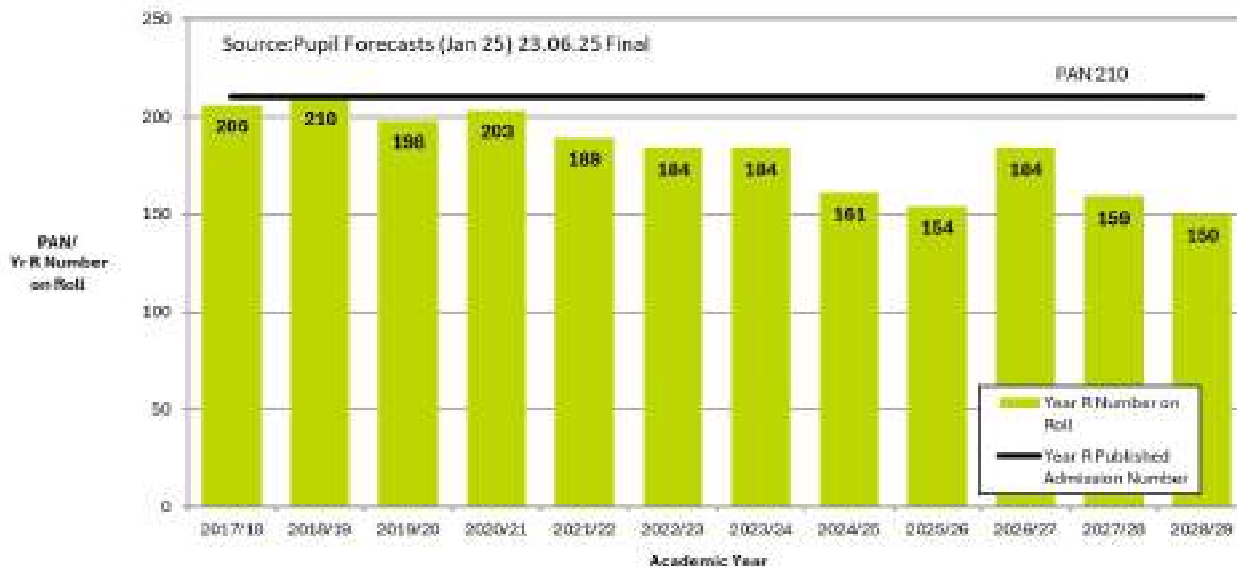
border. Traditionally around 20 to 30 East Saltdean children per year group obtain a place at Saltdean Primary School. Saltdean Primary School’s PAN reduces from 90 to 60 from 2025/26, however, owing to their proximity to the school, East Saltdean children are still likely to obtain Year R places there. Additionally, a few Peacehaven area children normally attend St Margaret’s CE Primary School and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School in nearby Rottingdean, both in Brighton and Hove.

**Peacehaven primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	210	206
2018/19	210	210
2019/20	210	198
2020/21	210	203
2021/22	210	189
2022/23	210	184
2023/24	210	184
2024/25	210	161
2025/26	210	154
2026/27	210	184
2027/28	210	159
2028/29	210	150

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Peacehaven primary Year R numbers



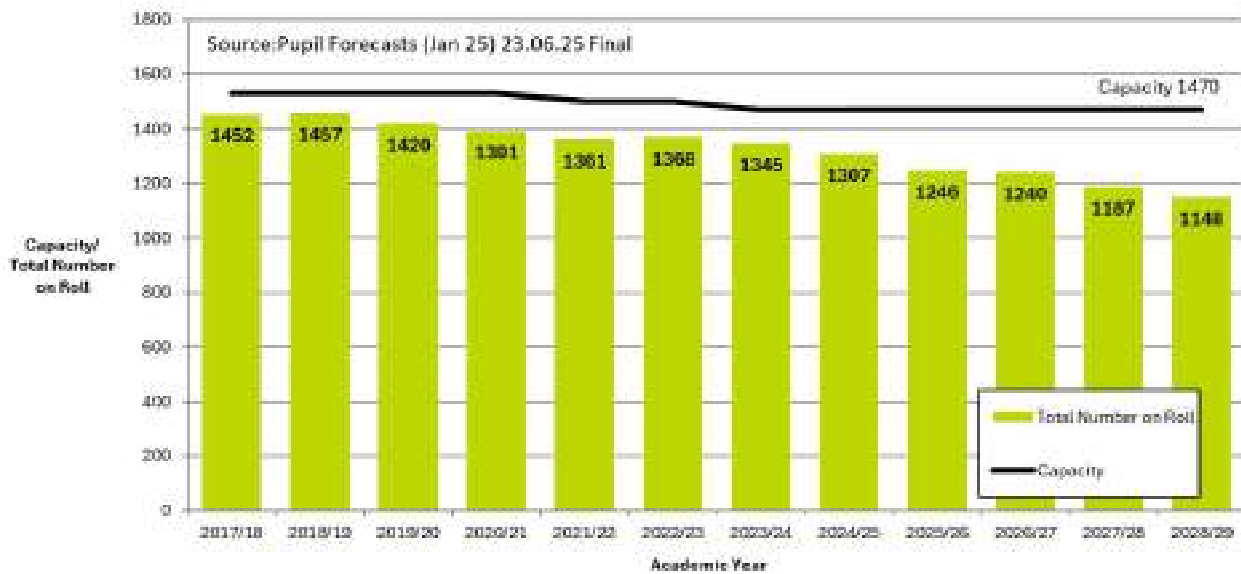
By 2028/29, surplus places in the area, at 11% in 2024/25, could have risen to 22%.

## Peacehaven total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1530	1452	78	5%
2018/19	1530	1457	73	5%
2019/20	1530	1420	110	7%
2020/21	1530	1391	139	9%
2021/22	1500	1361	139	9%
2022/23	1500	1368	132	9%
2023-24	1470	1345	125	9%
2024/25	1470	1307	163	11%
2025/26	1470	1246	224	15%
2026/27	1470	1240	230	16%
2027/28	1470	1187	283	19%
2028/29	1470	1148	322	22%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Peacehaven total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The majority of surplus places in the area are within the two academies. The one maintained school is largely full. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with the trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

## Secondary places

Seahaven Academy's school admissions area covers both Newhaven and Peacehaven and includes the priority admissions area of Peacehaven Community School.

There is a net outflow from the area to Seaford Head School and Priory School, in Lewes. There are also inflows from and outflows to schools in Brighton and Hove.

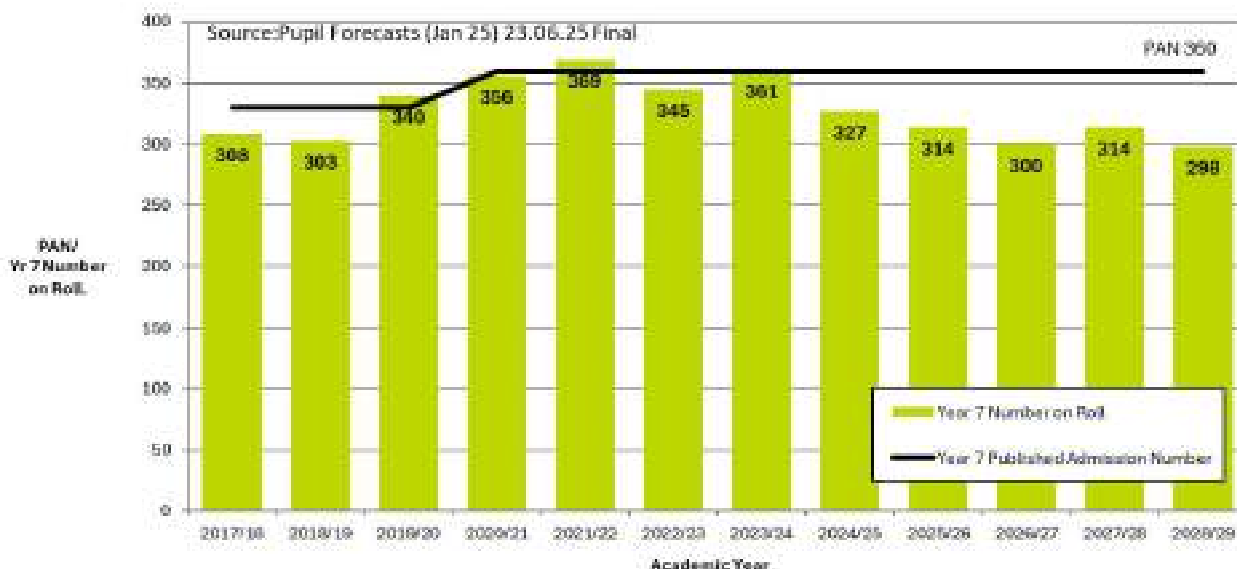
Both Peacehaven Community School and Seahaven Academy have experienced pressures on Year 7 places in recent years. These are now abating. Based on current preference patterns, most of the spare Year 7 places are likely to be at Seahaven Academy.

**The Havens secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	330	308
2018/19	330	303
2019/20	330	340
2020/21	360	356
2021/22	360	369
2022/23	360	345
2023/24	360	361
2024/25	360	327
2025/26	360	314
2026/27	360	300
2027/28	360	314
2028/29	360	298

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

The Havens secondary Year 7 numbers



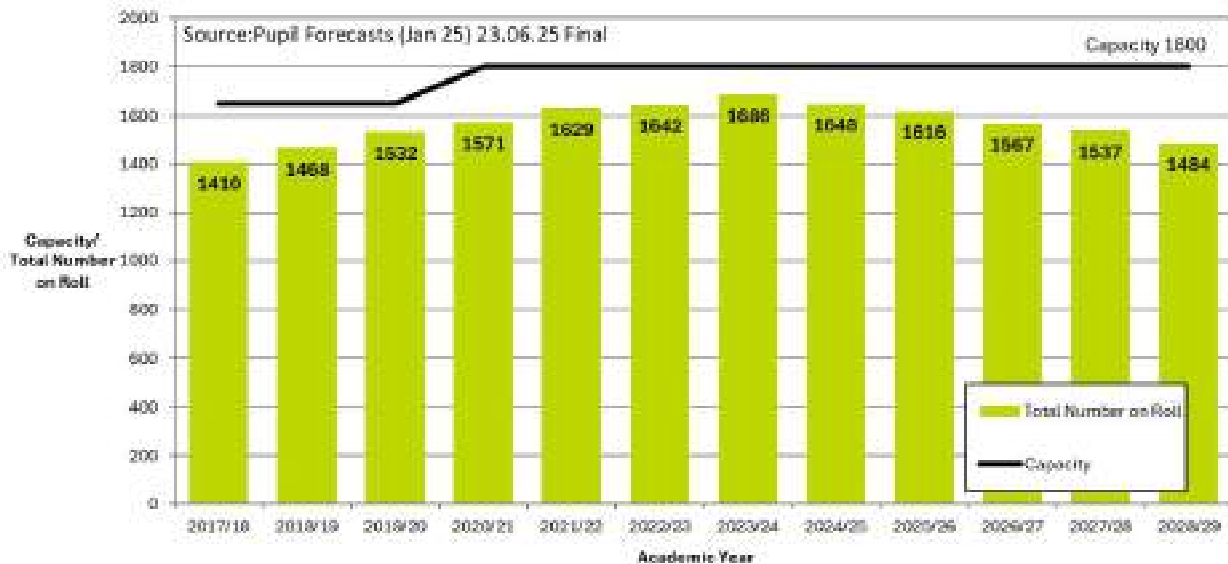
In line with falling Year 7 intakes, increasing numbers of surplus places are forecast, rising from 8% in 2024/25 to 18% by 2028/29.

### The Havens total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1650	1410	240	15%
2018/19	1650	1468	182	11%
2019/20	1650	1532	118	7%
2020/21	1800	1571	229	13%
2021/22	1800	1629	171	10%
2022/23	1800	1642	158	9%
2023/24	1800	1686	114	6%
2024/25	1800	1648	152	8%
2025/26	1800	1616	184	10%
2026/27	1800	1567	233	13%
2027/28	1800	1537	263	15%
2028/29	1800	1484	316	18%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### The Havens total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned in the area.

# Seaford

## Schools

There are four primary schools in the area and one secondary school with a sixth form. One primary school has nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Anney Catholic Primary School	4-11	Academy
Chyngton School	4-11	Academy
Cradle Hill Community Primary School	2-11	Community
Seaford Primary School	4-11	Community
<b>Secondary</b>		
Seaford Head School	11-18	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

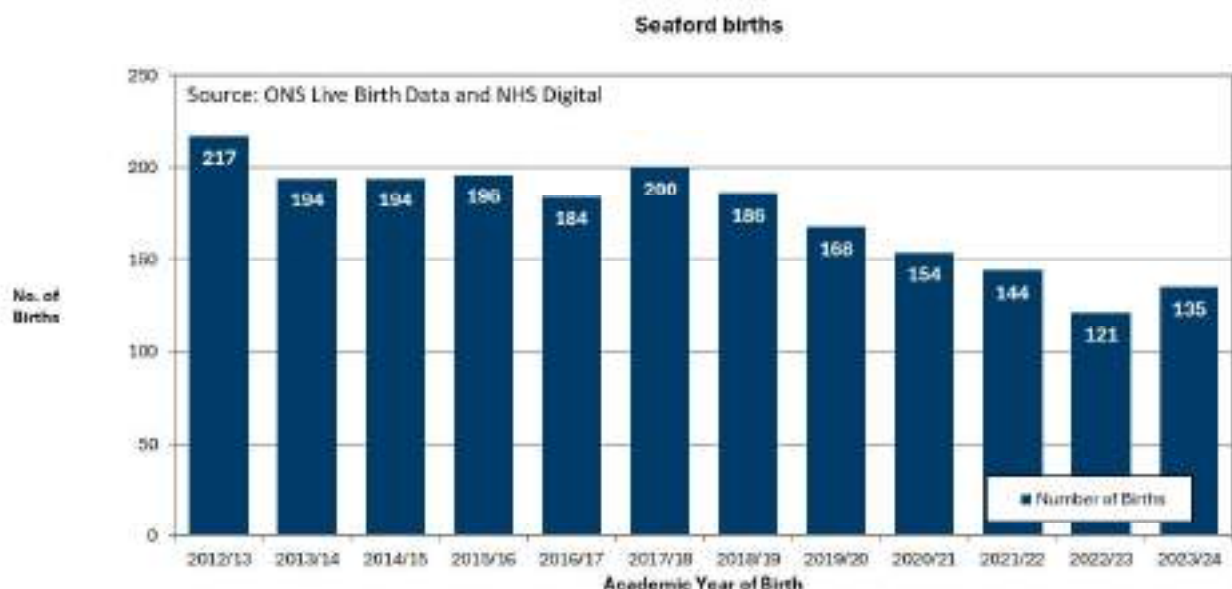
## Births

Following a period of falling births, numbers in 2023/24 are up on 2022/23 figures. It is not clear yet whether this signifies the start of a prolonged recovery or may be an anomaly.

### Seaford births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	217
2013/14	194
2014/15	194
2015/16	196
2016/17	184
2017/18	200
2018/19	186
2019/20	168
2020/21	154
2021/22	144
2022/23	121
2023/24	135

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Lewes District Council (LDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 300 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2029/30. LDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

Based on birth and GP data, reception (Year R) intake numbers in Seaford are predicted to be very low over the plan period.

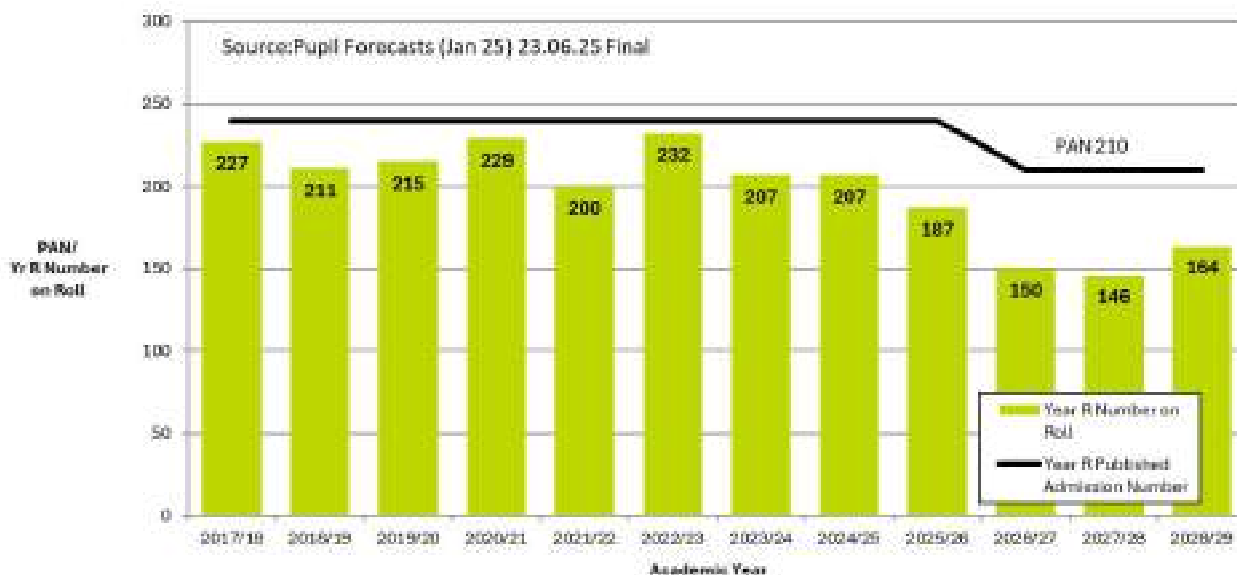
There are inflows of pupils to Seaford primary schools from Newhaven and outflows to Alfriston School.

### Seaford primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	240	227
2018/19	240	211
2019/20	240	215
2020/21	240	229
2021/22	240	200
2022/23	240	232
2023/24	240	207
2024/25	240	207
2025/26	240	187
2026/27	210	150
2027/28	210	146
2028/29	210	164

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Seaford primary Year R numbers



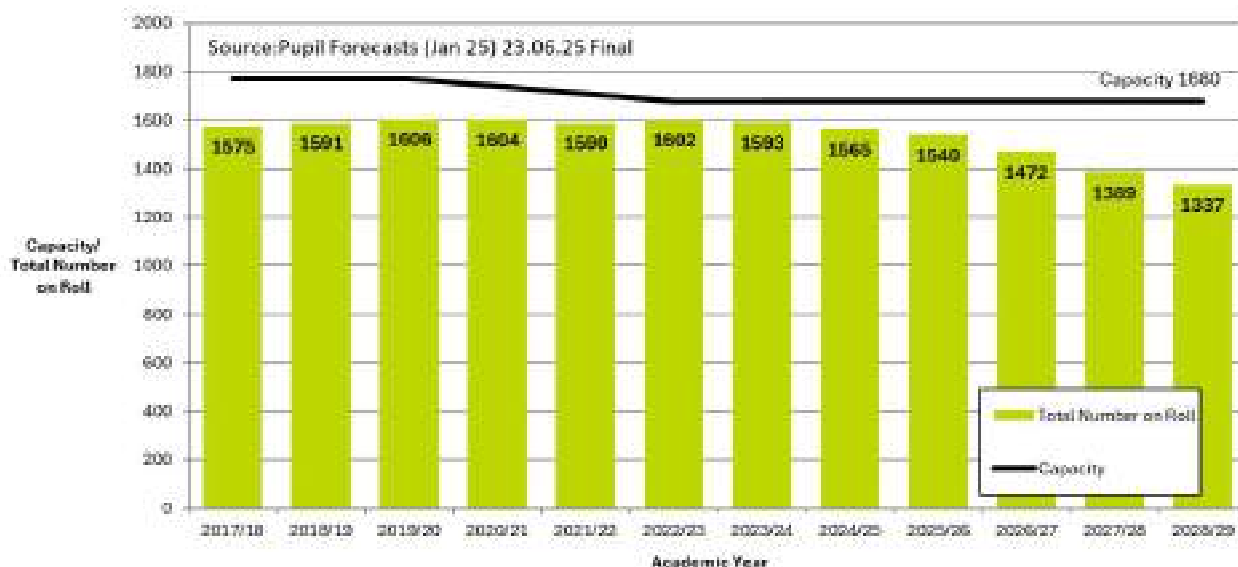
By 2028/29, surplus places in the area, at 7% in 2024/25, could have risen to 20%.

### Seaford total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1770	1575	195	11%
2018/19	1770	1591	179	10%
2019/20	1770	1606	164	9%
2020/21	1740	1604	136	8%
2021/22	1710	1590	120	7%
2022/23	1680	1602	78	5%
2023/24	1680	1593	87	5%
2024/25	1680	1565	115	7%
2025/26	1680	1540	140	8%
2026/27	1680	1472	208	12%
2027/28	1680	1389	291	17%
2028/29	1680	1337	343	20%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

## Seaford total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

The majority of surplus places in the area are within the two academies. The two maintained schools are largely full. The Seaford Learning Trust has taken the decision to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Chyngton School from 60 to 30 with effect from 2026/27.

Chyngton School was successful with its School Based Nursery Programme bid earlier this year and will establish school-run nursery provision on site from January 2026.

## Secondary places

Seaford Head School lowered its PAN from 240 to 232 from 2024/25.

Although the school continues to be oversubscribed, it is currently forecast to be able to keep to its PAN. This will entail the school admissions system redirecting non-priority out of area applicants to nearby Seahaven Academy and Peacehaven Community School.

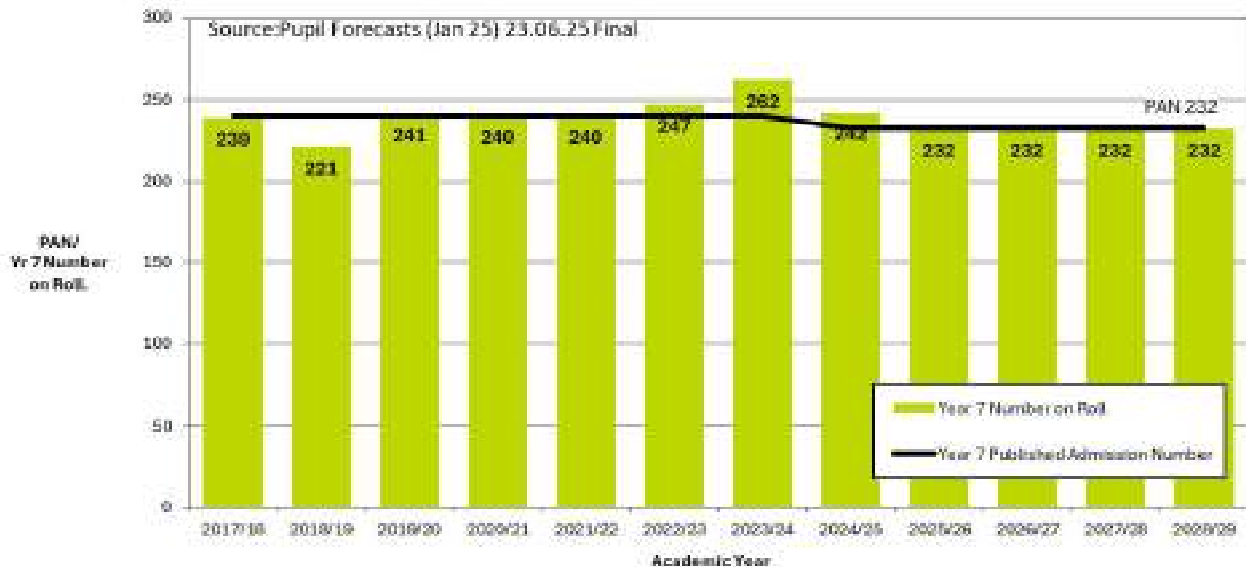
Part of Seaford Head School's admissions area overlaps with that of King's Academy Ringmer. The school experiences significant levels of demand from The Havens area.

### Seaford Head secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	240	239
2018/19	240	221
2019/20	240	241
2020/21	240	240
2021/22	240	240
2022/23	240	247
2023/24	240	262
2024/25	232	242
2025/26	232	232
2026/27	232	232
2027/28	232	232
2028/29	232	232

Source: ESCC Pupil Forecasts (January 2024) 03.07.24

Seaford Head secondary Year 7 numbers



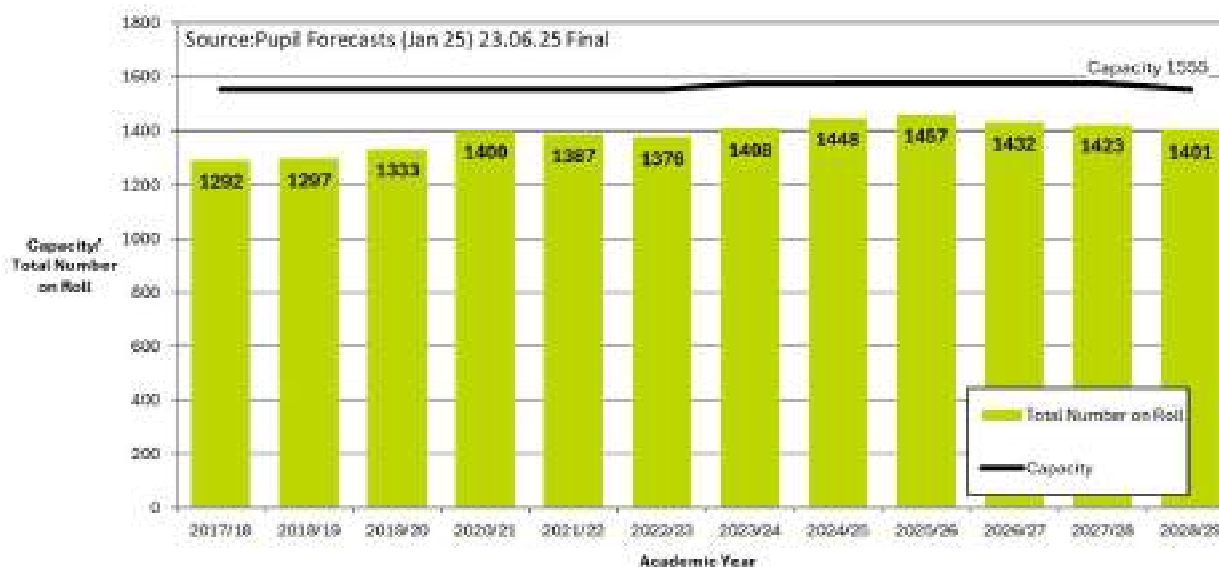
Seaford Head School had 8% surplus places in 2024/25. This is forecast to grow to 10% by the end of the plan period. Surplus places are mainly in the sixth form.

## Seaford Head School total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1555	1292	263	17%
2018/19	1555	1297	258	17%
2019/20	1555	1333	222	14%
2020/21	1555	1400	155	10%
2021/22	1555	1387	168	11%
2022/23	1555	1376	179	12%
2023/24	1575	1408	167	11%
2024/25	1575	1448	127	8%
2025/26	1575	1457	118	7%
2026/27	1575	1432	143	9%
2027/28	1575	1423	152	10%
2028/29	1555	1401	154	10%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Seaford Head School total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned in the area.

# Rural Lewes

## Schools

There are nine primary schools and two secondary schools in the area. Three primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Barcombe Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Ditchling St Margaret's Church of England Primary School	2-11	Academy
Firle Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Hamsey Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Newick Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
Plumpton Primary School	4-11	Community
Ringmer Primary and Nursery School	2-11	Academy
Wivelsfield Primary School	2-11	Community
<b>Secondary</b>		
Chailey School	11-16	Community
King's Academy Ringmer	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

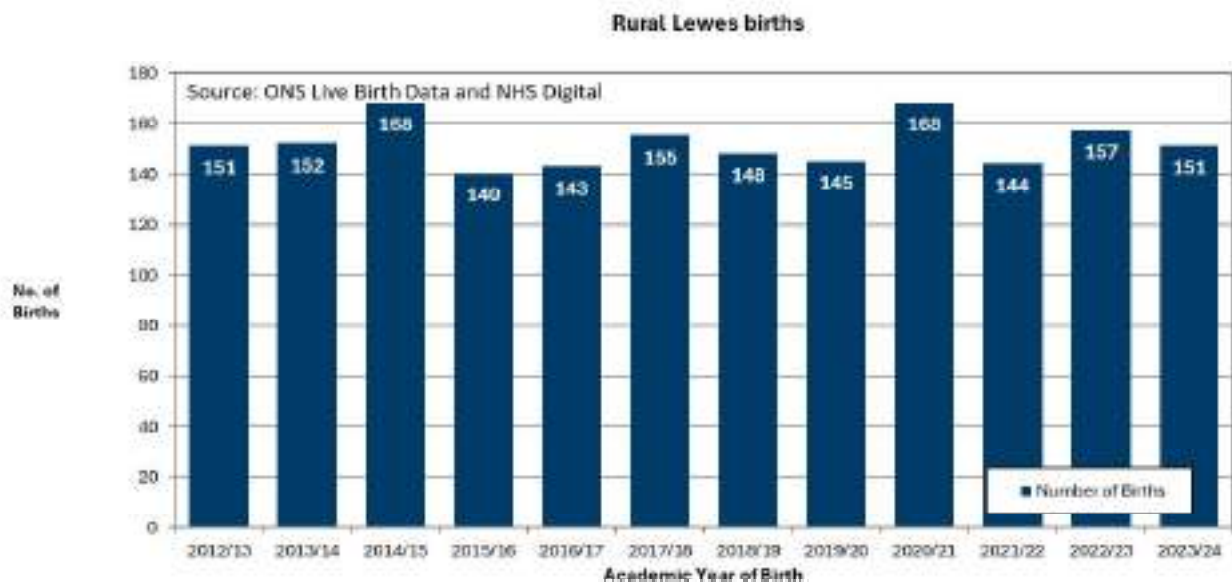
## Births

Births in the area have remained largely consistent in recent years.

### Rural Lewes births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	151
2013/14	152
2014/15	168
2015/16	140
2016/17	143
2017/18	155
2018/19	148
2019/20	145
2020/21	168
2021/22	144
2022/23	157
2023/24	151

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Lewes District Council (LDC) and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) provide the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 1000 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Lewes District Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2029/30, of which approximately 400 are in Ringmer Parish and 200 are in Wivelsfield Parish. LDC and the SDNPA are currently preparing new Local Plans. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

The 219 reception (Year R) places in primary schools across the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future.

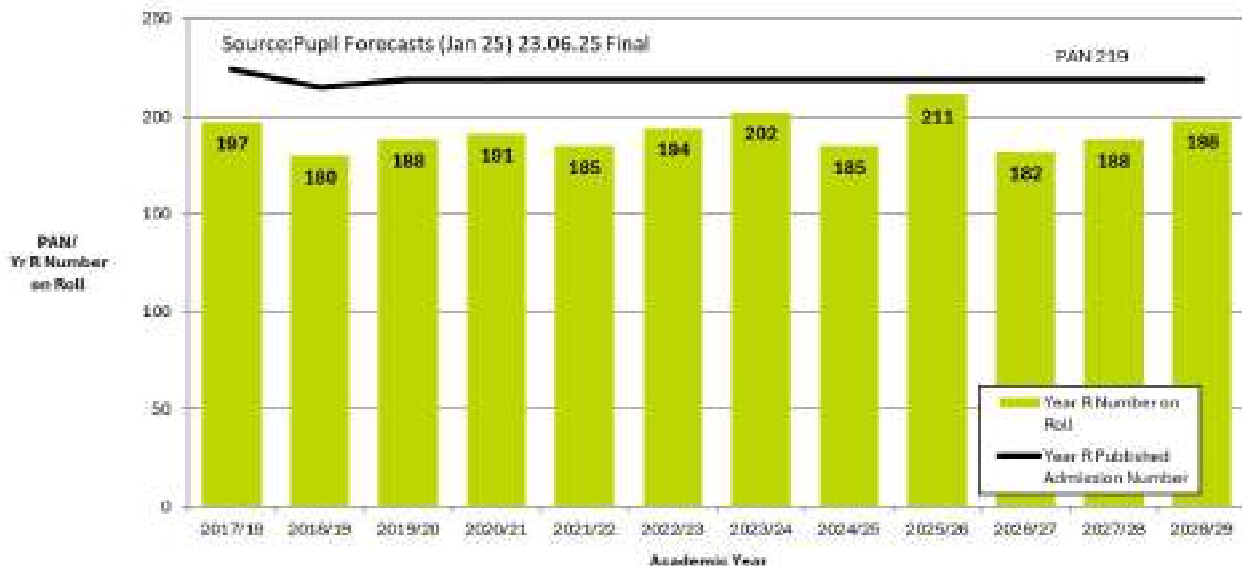
However, the picture will vary between individual rural areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate significantly from year to year, owing to the fact that the size of the cohorts of children living in small geographical areas sometimes differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise to accommodate these fluctuations.

### Rural Lewes primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	224	197
2018/19	215	180
2019/20	219	188
2020/21	219	191
2021/22	219	185
2022/23	219	194
2023/24	219	202
2024/25	219	185
2025/26	219	211
2026/27	219	182
2027/28	219	188
2028/29	219	198

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Rural Lewes primary Year R numbers



Total pupil numbers in the area are likely to remain consistent in the period to 2028/29. Surplus places for the area stood at 9% in 2024/25 and are forecast to be relatively static over the plan period. Two schools have 25% or more surplus places.

### Rural Lewes total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1598	1381	217	14%
2018/19	1535	1400	135	9%
2019/20	1533	1440	93	6%
2020/21	1533	1446	87	6%
2021/22	1533	1450	83	5%
2022/23	1563	1439	124	8%
2023/24	1563	1429	134	9%
2024/25	1563	1419	144	9%
2025/26	1563	1450	113	7%
2026/27	1563	1441	122	8%
2027/28	1563	1428	135	9%
2028/29	1563	1441	122	8%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Rural Lewes total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 11.

Linked to pressures arising from children coming out of recent and planned housing developments, the Year R position at Wivelsfield Primary School is likely to continue to be tight. The school experiences significant inflows of children from the towns of Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, both in West Sussex. Large scale housing development in and around both these towns is likely to lead to additional demand for places at Wivelsfield. However, owing to in-area pressures, few West Sussex children are likely to gain admission.

West Sussex County Council reports that the opening of the new Hurst Farm Primary School, on the edge of Haywards Heath, originally scheduled for September 2020, has been significantly delayed and is unlikely to happen until 2027/28 at the earliest.

Ditchling St Margarets CE Primary School takes around half of its Year R intake from West Sussex. The school will voluntarily exceed its PAN in 2025/26 to accommodate West Sussex children. This may be repeated in future years.

Based on birth and GP registration data, Ringmer Primary School is forecast to have sufficient Year R places to meet demand in the coming years. However, new housing developments planned for the village in the period to 2029/30, coming on top of recently completed new developments, could potentially significantly increase the numbers of in-area children coming through into Year R.

The local authority is working with all small schools with large surpluses as part of our Small Schools Strategy and we will discuss with individual schools any action required if appropriate.

The local authority is working with Chailey St Peter’s CE Primary School to establish a specialist facility with a designation of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for up to 12 pupils with autism. The new facility is due to open on 1 January 2026.

## Secondary places at Chailey School

There is some movement of children between the Chailey School area, and the areas served by Uckfield College and Priory School, in Lewes.

There is also significant movement of children to and from neighbouring West Sussex. Demand from across the border, particularly with the housing developments being built in Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, should allow Chailey School to generally fill to its PAN in most years. The school’s PAN increased from 174 to 180 in 2025/26.

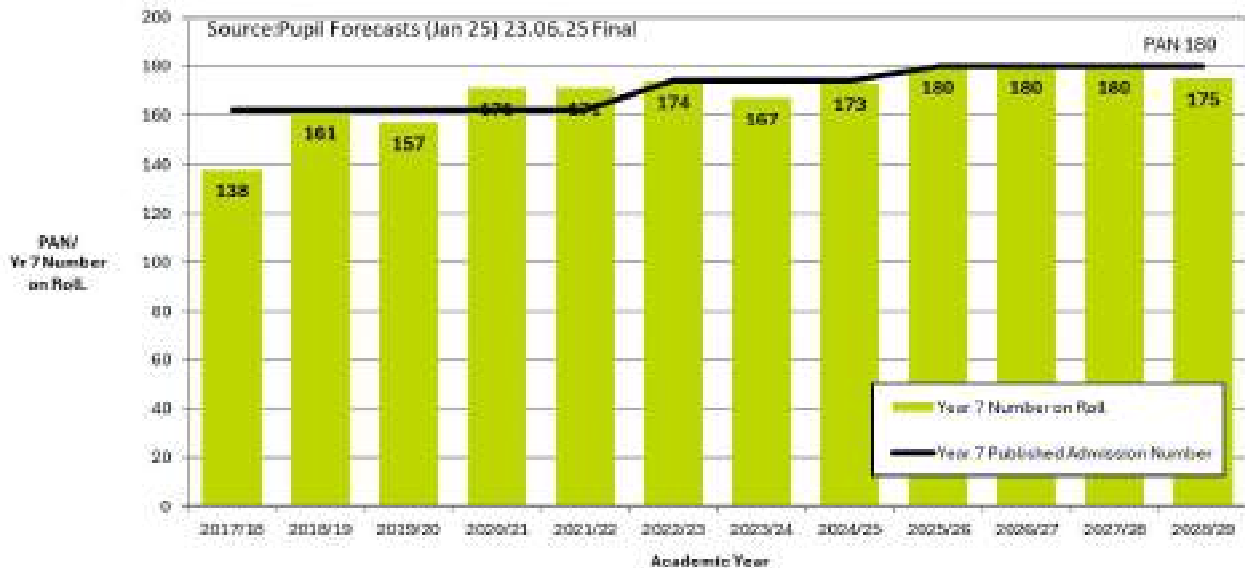
Although the village of Ditchling is in a joint admissions area between Chailey School and Priory School, it is also in the admissions area of Downlands Community School in Hassocks, West Sussex. Traditionally children from the village have attended Downlands, which is their nearest school. The village of Forest Row, in Wealden, is in a joint school admissions area with Chailey School and Beacon Academy, in Crowborough.

### Chailey School secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	162	138
2018/19	162	161
2019/20	162	157
2020/21	162	171
2021/22	162	171
2022/23	174	174
2023/24	174	167
2024/25	174	173
2025/26	180	180
2026/27	180	180
2027/28	180	180
2028/29	180	175

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Chailey School secondary Year 7 numbers



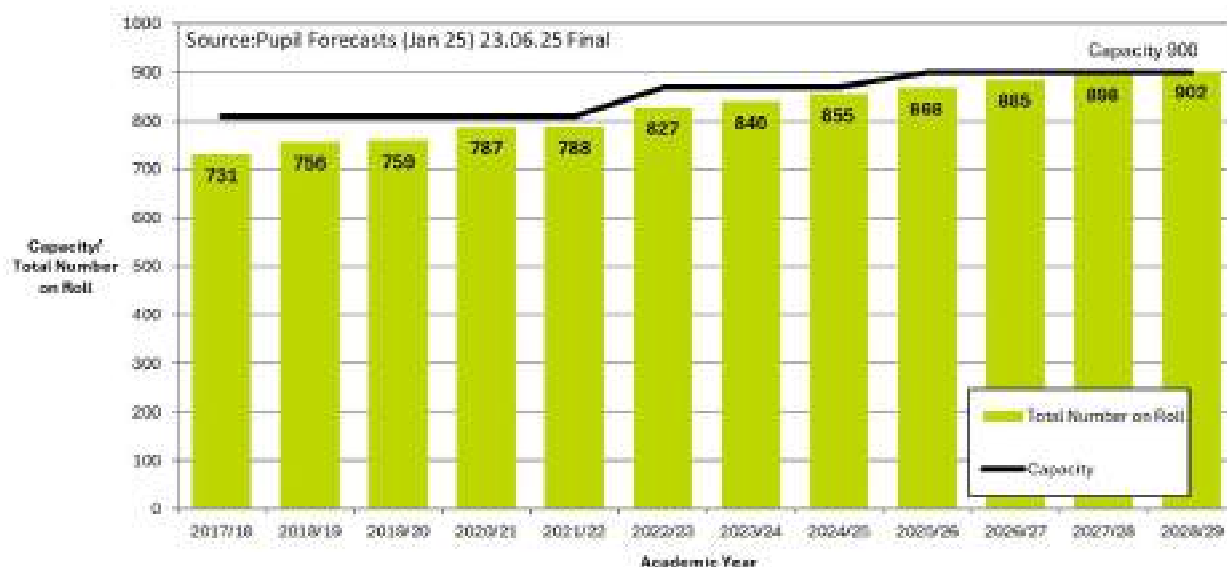
Overall pupil numbers are likely to rise during the plan period because of the increase to the schools PAN. Surplus places stood at 2% and are forecast to remain low or even fall to 0% by the end of the plan period.

### Chailey School total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	810	731	79	10%
2018/19	810	756	54	7%
2019/20	810	759	51	6%
2020/21	810	787	23	3%
2021/22	810	788	22	3%
2022/23	870	827	43	5%
2023/24	870	840	30	3%
2024/25	870	855	15	2%
2025/26	900	868	32	4%
2026/27	900	885	15	2%
2027/28	900	898	2	0%
2028/29	900	902	(2)	0%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Challey School total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

## Secondary places at King’s Academy Ringmer

Part of King’s Academy Ringmer’s admissions area overlaps with that of Priory School in Lewes. There are also partial overlaps with the admissions areas of Seaford Head School, Hailsham Academy and Uckfield College.

The school admits large numbers of children from the Hailsham area. There are also significant inflows and outflows to and from the Lewes and Uckfield areas.

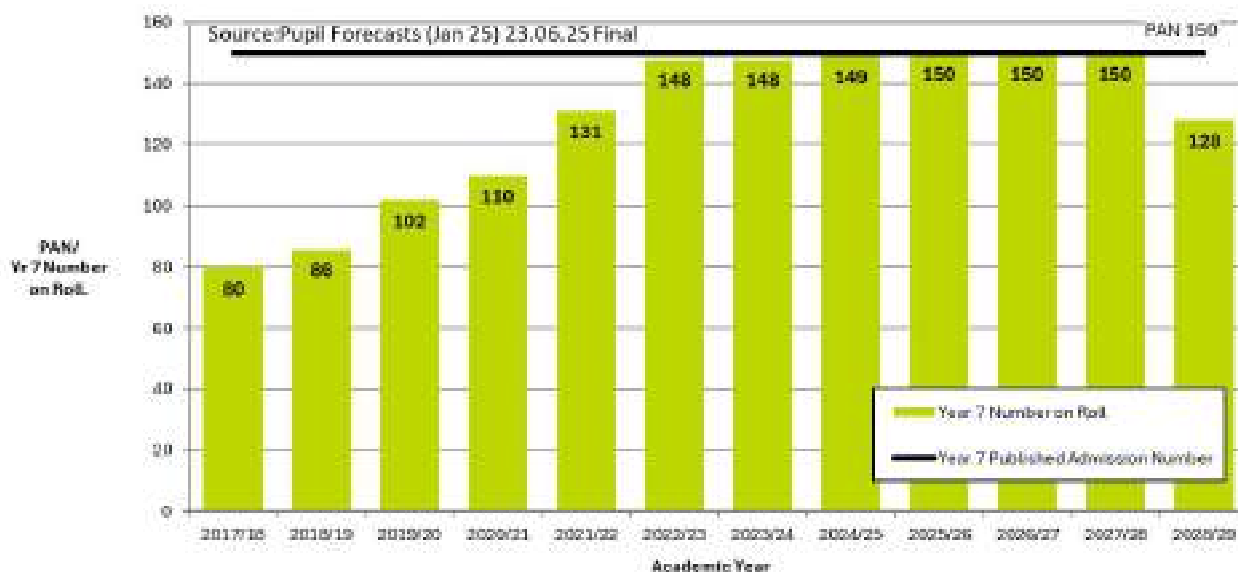
King’s Academy Ringmer nearly filled to its PAN in 2024/25 and, depending on parental preference patterns in relation to surrounding schools, could continue to have high intake numbers in the short term. However, whether the forecast numbers are achieved will partly depend on the school continuing to experience large inflows from the Hailsham area.

King’s Academy Ringmer secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	150	80
2018/19	150	86
2019/20	150	102
2020/21	150	110
2021/22	150	131
2022/23	150	148
2023/24	150	148
2024/25	150	149
2025/26	150	150
2026/27	150	150
2027/28	150	150
2028/29	150	128

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### King's Academy Ringmer secondary Year 7 numbers



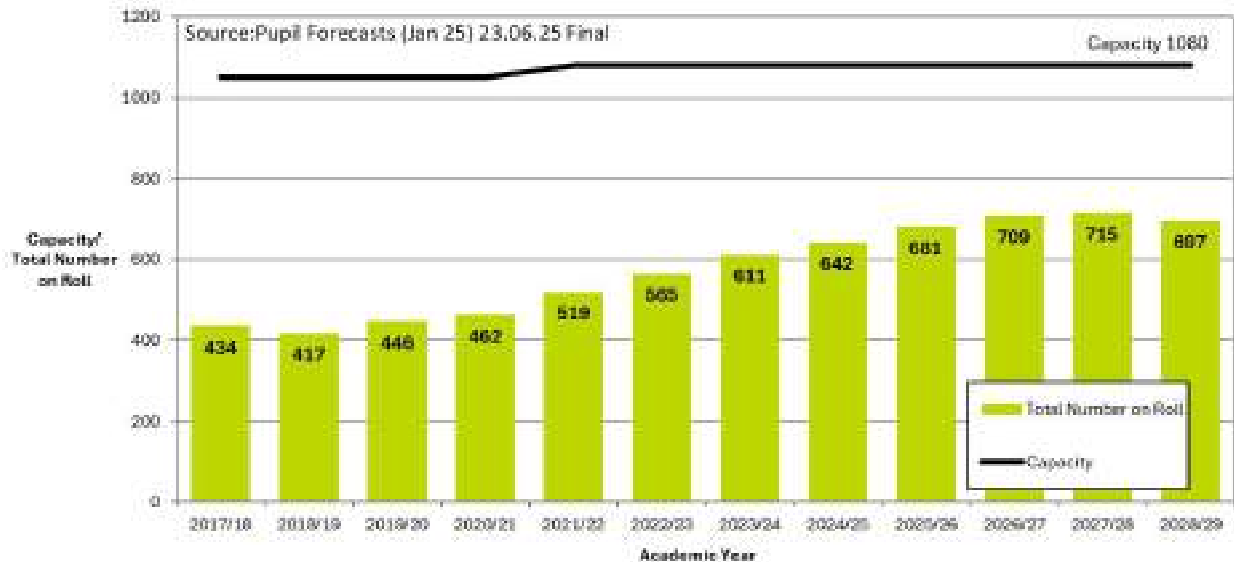
Overall pupil numbers at the school are forecast to rise by the end of the plan period, although they will remain below the school's capacity. This is largely due to accommodation remaining on site following a previous PAN reduction from 180 to 150 and the school's sixth form closing.

### King's Academy Ringmer total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1050	434	616	59%
2018/19	1050	417	633	60%
2019/20	1050	446	604	58%
2020/21	1050	462	588	56%
2021/22	1080	519	561	52%
2022/23	1080	565	515	48%
2023/24	1080	611	469	43%
2024/25	1080	642	438	41%
2025/26	1080	681	399	37%
2026/27	1080	709	371	34%
2027/28	1080	715	365	34%
2028/29	1080	697	383	35%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### King's Academy Ringmer total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned in the area.

# Bexhill and surrounding area

## Schools

There are ten primary schools in the area and two secondary schools. Three primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
All Saints Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Catsfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chantry Community Primary School	4-11	Academy
Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
King Offa Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Little Common School	4-11	Academy
Ninfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
Pebsham Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
<b>Secondary</b>		
Bexhill High Academy	11-16	Academy
St Richard's Catholic College	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

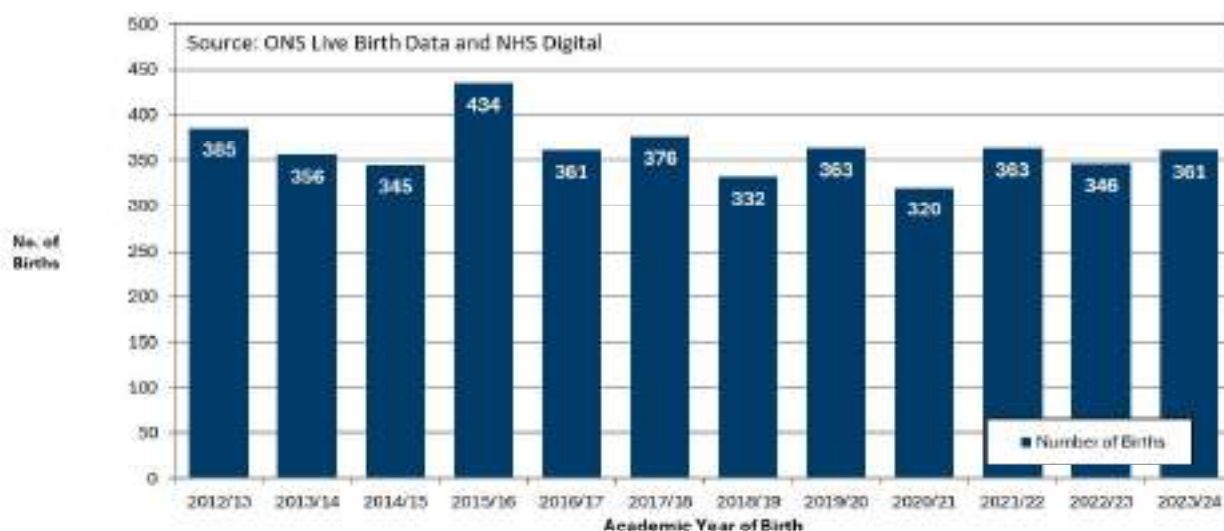
Births in Bexhill have remained relatively steady in recent years.

### Bexhill and surrounding area births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	385
2013/14	356
2014/15	345
2015/16	434
2016/17	361
2017/18	376
2018/19	332
2019/20	363
2020/21	320
2021/22	363
2022/23	346
2023/24	361

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Bexhill and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

Rother District Council (RDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 1,100 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2027/28. RDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

Births and GP registration data indicate that the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 425 for the area should not be exceeded in the immediate future.

However, a high volume of new housing is likely to come forward over the next few years, including the remainder of the large development on land north of Pebsham. This, coupled with a general upswing in future births, could result in a shortfall of reception (Year R) places emerging towards the end of the decade.

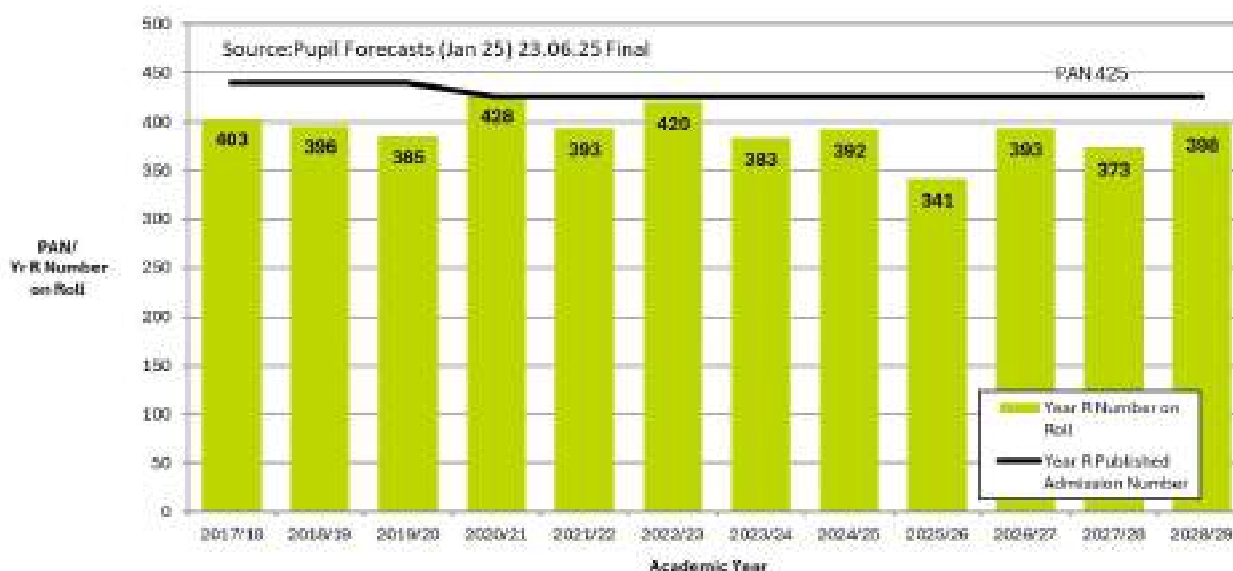
Some primary schools in the area experience inflows of children from Hastings. There are also outflows to surrounding schools including Battle and Langton CE Primary School.

### Bexhill and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	440	403
2018/19	440	396
2019/20	440	385
2020/21	425	428
2021/22	425	393
2022/23	425	420
2023/24	425	383
2024/25	425	392
2025/26	425	341
2026/27	425	393
2027/28	425	373
2028/29	425	398

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Bexhill and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



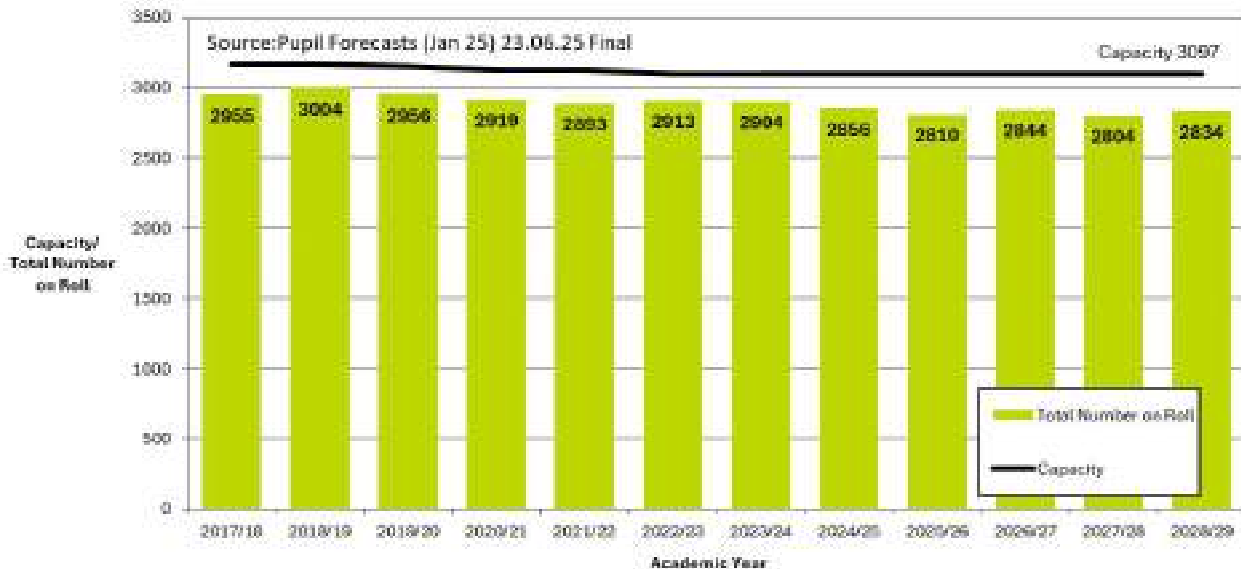
Surplus places in the area stood at 8% in 2024/25 and are forecast to be relatively static over the plan period. One school in the area has surplus places of 25% or more.

**Bexhill and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	3170	2955	215	7%
2018/19	3170	3004	166	5%
2019/20	3157	2956	201	6%
2020/21	3127	2919	208	7%
2021/22	3127	2893	234	7%
2022/23	3097	2913	184	6%
2023/24	3097	2904	193	6%
2024/25	3097	2856	241	8%
2025/26	3097	2810	287	9%
2026/27	3097	2844	253	8%
2027/28	3097	2804	293	9%
2028/29	3097	2834	263	8%

Source: ESCC Pupil Forecasts (January 2024) 03.07.24

**Bexhill and surrounding area total primary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

The local authority has an option agreement on land for a new school within the development site north of Pebsham and will bring forward proposals to establish provision to serve the development at the appropriate time. The timing of this will be dependent upon when the school site is transferred by the developer to the local authority and the demand for places in the area at that time.

Little Common School lowered its age range from September 2025 to establish school-run nursery provision on site.

**Secondary places**

Bexhill High Academy has a PAN of 300. St Richard’s Catholic College has a PAN of 200, giving a combined PAN of 500 for the town. Both schools are forecast to be full or close to full to their PANs in the coming years. A shortfall of around 15 places is predicted in 2027/28.

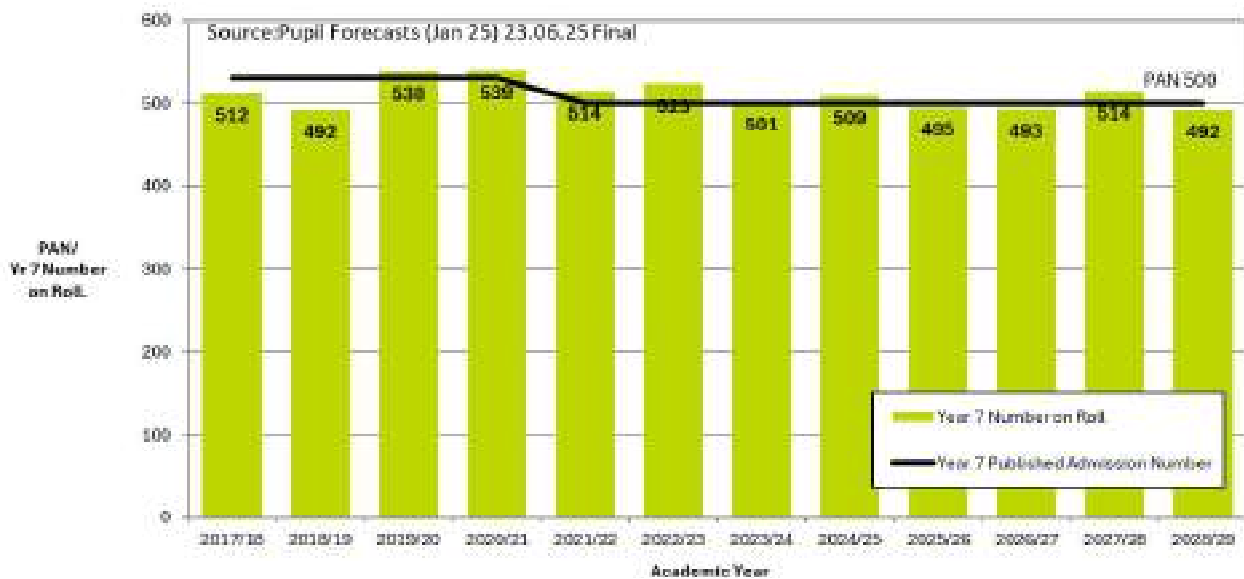
St Richard’s Catholic College takes significant numbers of children from Hastings, Eastbourne, and Willingdon. Bexhill High Academy takes significant numbers of children from Hastings. There are also outflows of children from Bexhill to Claverham Community College and Hastings.

**Bexhill and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	530	512
2018/19	530	492
2019/20	530	538
2020/21	530	539
2021/22	500	514
2022/23	500	523
2023/24	500	501
2024/25	500	509
2025/26	500	495
2026/27	500	493
2027/28	500	514
2028/29	500	492

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Bexhill and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers**



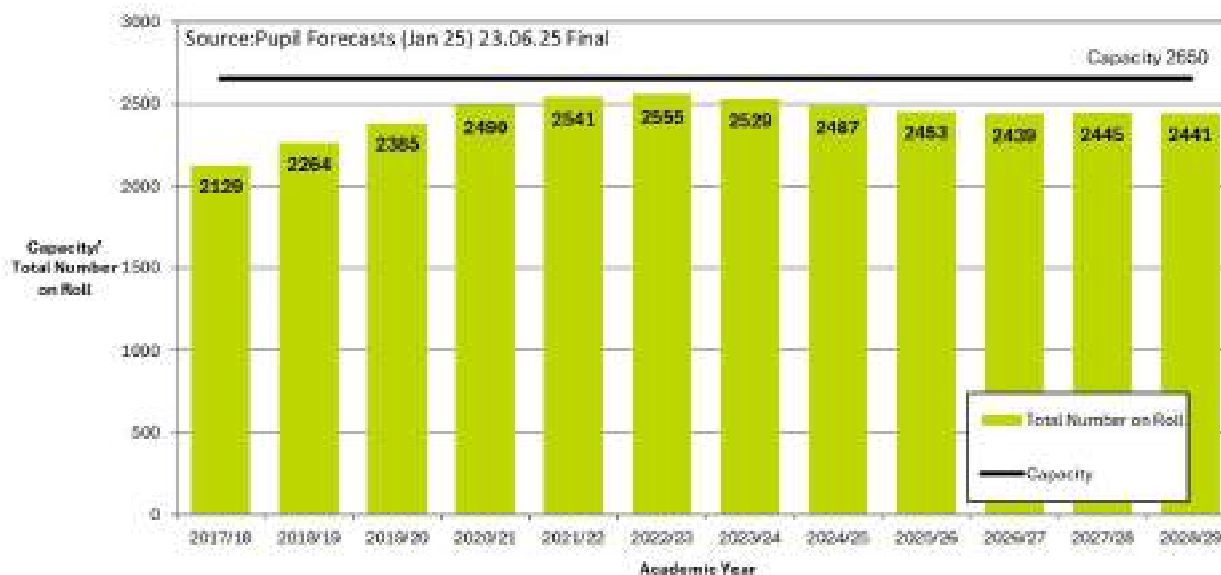
Total pupil numbers in the area are forecast to be relatively static over the plan period, with surplus places between 6% and 8%.

## Bexhill and surrounding total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	2650	2129	521	20%
2018/19	2650	2264	386	15%
2019/20	2650	2385	265	10%
2020/21	2650	2490	160	6%
2021/22	2650	2541	109	4%
2022/23	2650	2555	95	4%
2023/24	2650	2529	121	5%
2024/25	2650	2487	163	6%
2025/26	2650	2453	197	7%
2026/27	2650	2439	211	8%
2027/28	2650	2445	205	8%
2028/29	2650	2441	209	8%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Bexhill and surrounding area total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1.

Should the predicted Year 7 shortfall emerge in 2027/28, the local authority will agree with Bexhill High Academy and St Richard's Catholic College how this can be accommodated.

Longer term should there be a requirement for additional permanent school places to serve the large volume of new housing planned in the area, the local authority will work with both schools and their respective academy trusts to address this.

# Battle

## Schools

There is one primary school in the area and one secondary school.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
<b>Secondary</b>		
Claverham Community College	11-16	Community

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

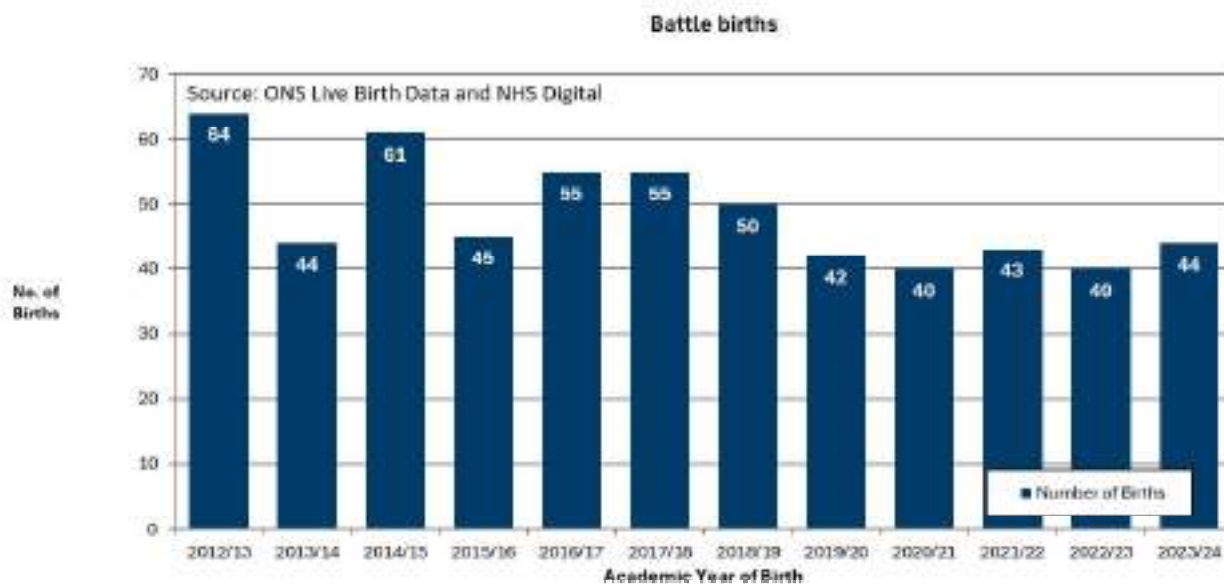
## Births

In recent years births in the area have been particularly low, with numbers in the low 40s.

### Battle births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	64
2013/14	44
2014/15	61
2015/16	45
2016/17	55
2017/18	55
2018/19	50
2019/20	42
2020/21	40
2021/22	43
2022/23	40
2023/24	44

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Rother District Council (RDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 300 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2027/28. RDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

Despite the number of new homes being built in the area, Battle and Langton CE Primary School is forecast to remain within its Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60 for the foreseeable future.

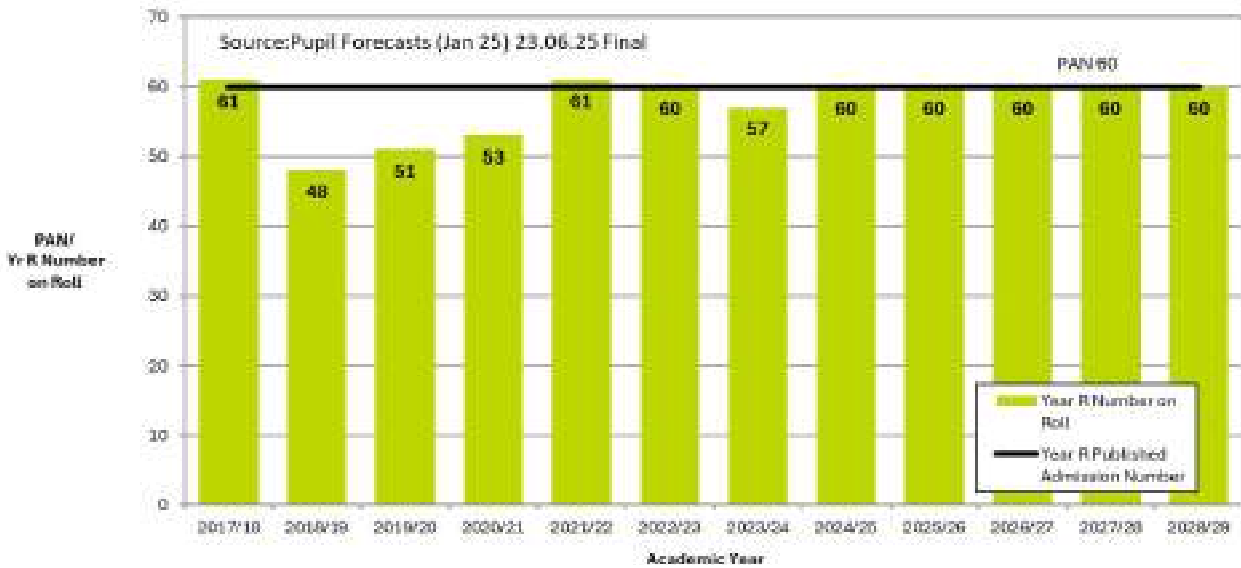
The school takes significant numbers of children from Hastings. There are also inflows from Bexhill and the surrounding area. Any future increases in local demand should be able to be offset by the school admission system restricting inflows of children from other areas where necessary.

**Battle primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	60	61
2018/19	60	48
2019/20	60	51
2020/21	60	53
2021/22	60	61
2022/23	60	60
2023/24	60	57
2024/25	60	60
2025/26	60	60
2026/27	60	60
2027/28	60	60
2028/29	60	60

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Battle primary Year R numbers**



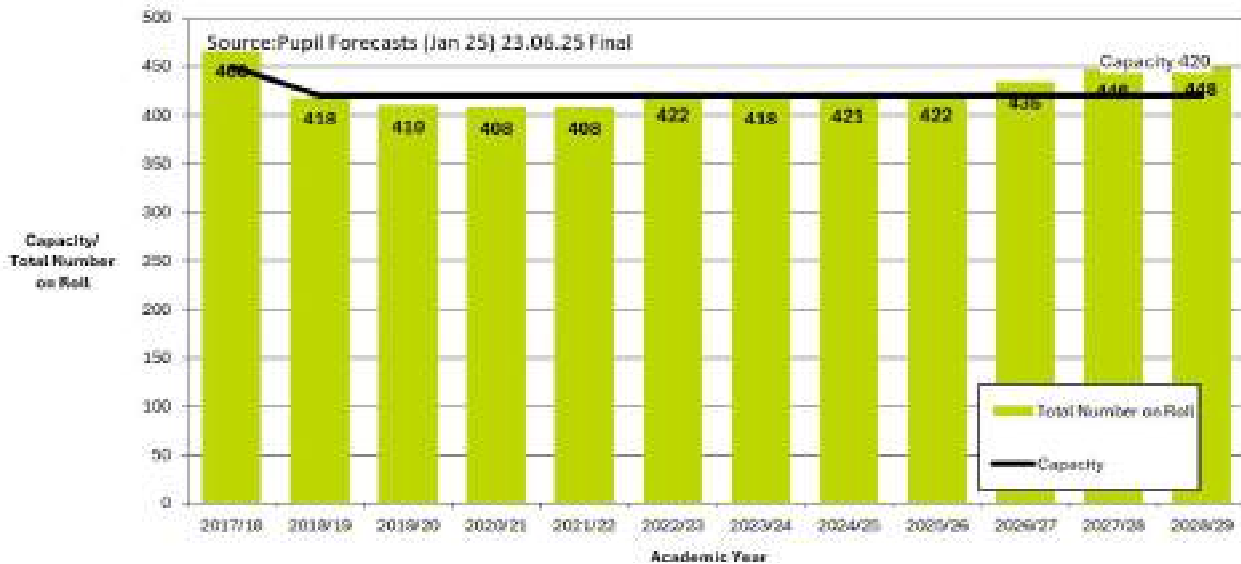
Although Battle and Langton CE Primary School should be able to keep to its PAN, marginal shortfalls in other year groups might be possible as a result of new housing developments. This could impact on overall numbers at the school and push it over capacity in the coming years.

### Battle total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	450	466	(16)	(4%)
2018/19	420	418	2	0%
2019/20	420	410	10	2%
2020/21	420	408	12	3%
2021/22	420	408	12	3%
2022/23	420	422	(2)	0%
2023/24	420	418	2	0%
2024/25	420	421	(1)	0%
2025/26	420	422	(2)	0%
2026/27	420	435	(15)	(3%)
2027/28	420	446	(26)	(6%)
2028/29	420	448	(28)	(7%)

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Battle total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The local authority will monitor the situation and, where possible, keep any shortfalls to a minimum.

### Secondary places

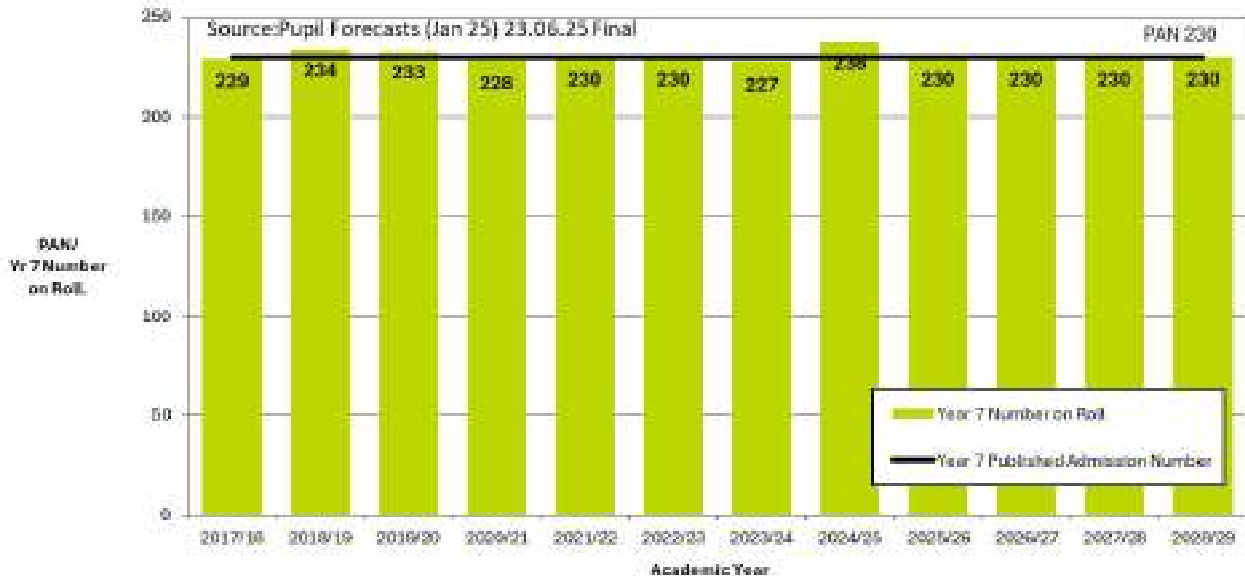
Claverham Community College has sufficient Year 7 places to meet in-area demand and so is likely to fill to its PAN each year with out-of-area children, particularly from Hastings and Bexhill. There are outflows of children from Battle to Robertsbridge Community College.

### Claverham Community College secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	230	229
2018/19	230	234
2019/20	230	233
2020/21	230	228
2021/22	230	230
2022/23	230	230
2023/24	230	227
2024/25	230	238
2025/26	230	230
2026/27	230	230
2027/28	230	230
2028/29	230	230

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Claverham Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



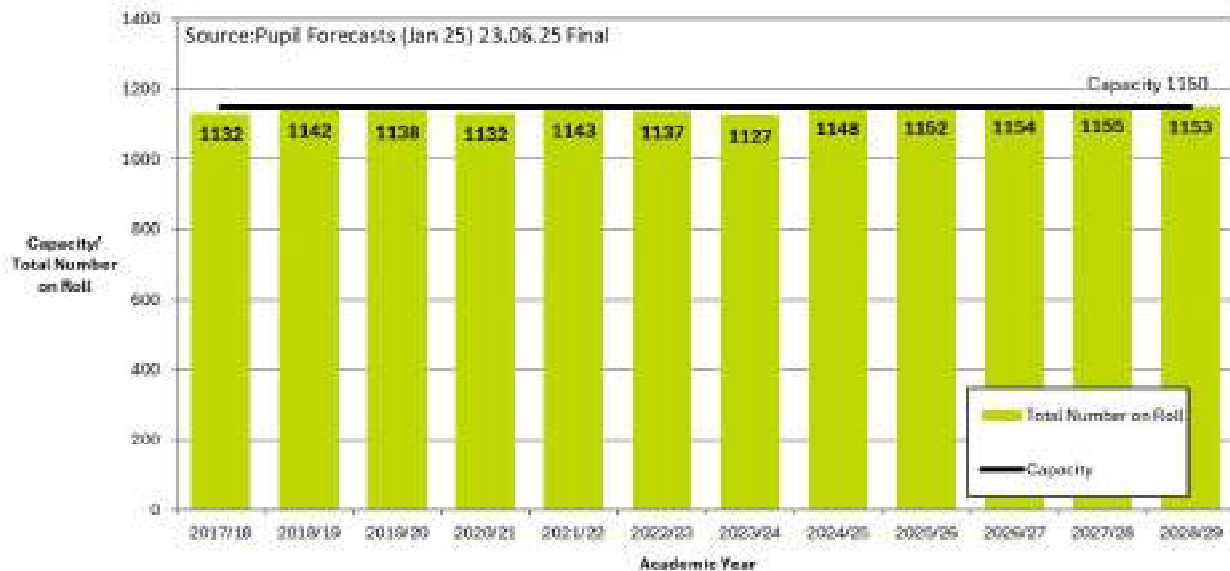
Overall pupil numbers at the school should remain constant during the plan period and may marginally exceed capacity.

### Claverham Community College total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1150	1132	18	2%
2018/19	1150	1142	8	1%
2019/20	1150	1138	12	1%
2020/21	1150	1132	18	2%
2021/22	1150	1143	7	1%
2022/23	1150	1137	13	1%
2023/24	1150	1127	23	2%
2024/25	1150	1148	2	0%
2025/26	1150	1152	(2)	0%
2026/27	1150	1154	(4)	0%
2027/28	1150	1155	(5)	0%
2028/29	1150	1153	(3)	0%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Claverham Community College total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned in the area.

# Rye and surrounding area

## Schools

There are four primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Rye Community Primary School	2-11	Academy
St Michael's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
St Thomas' Church of England Aided Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
<b>Secondary</b>		
Rye College	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

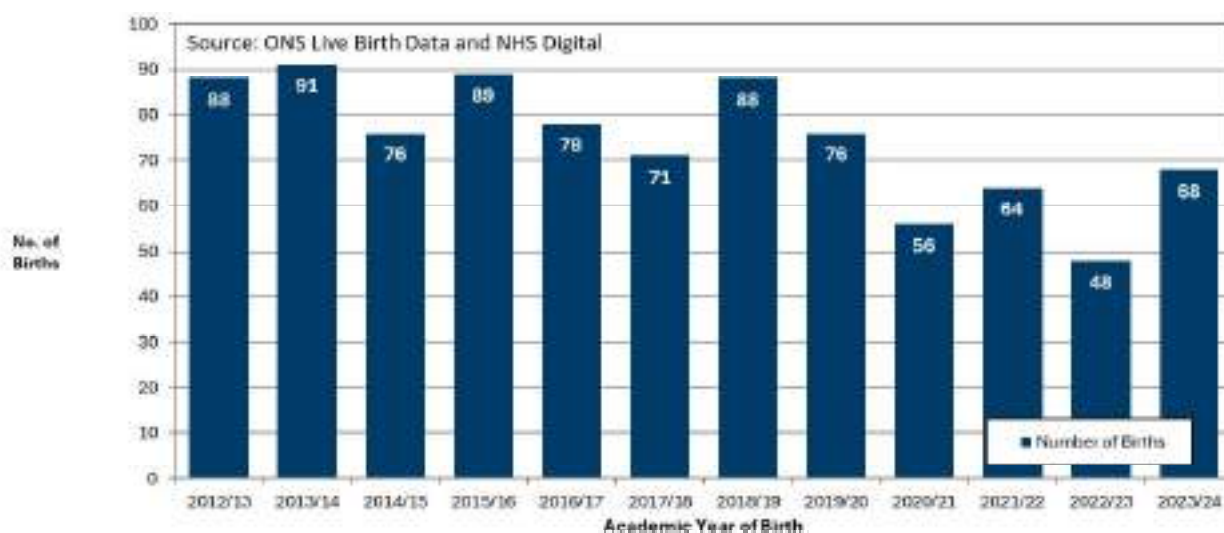
Births in the area have tended to fluctuate from year to year. However, 2022/23 was a particularly low birth year.

### Rye and surrounding area births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	88
2013/14	91
2014/15	76
2015/16	89
2016/17	78
2017/18	71
2018/19	88
2019/20	76
2020/21	56
2021/22	64
2022/23	48
2023/24	68

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Rye and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

Rother District Council (RDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 100 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2027/28. RDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

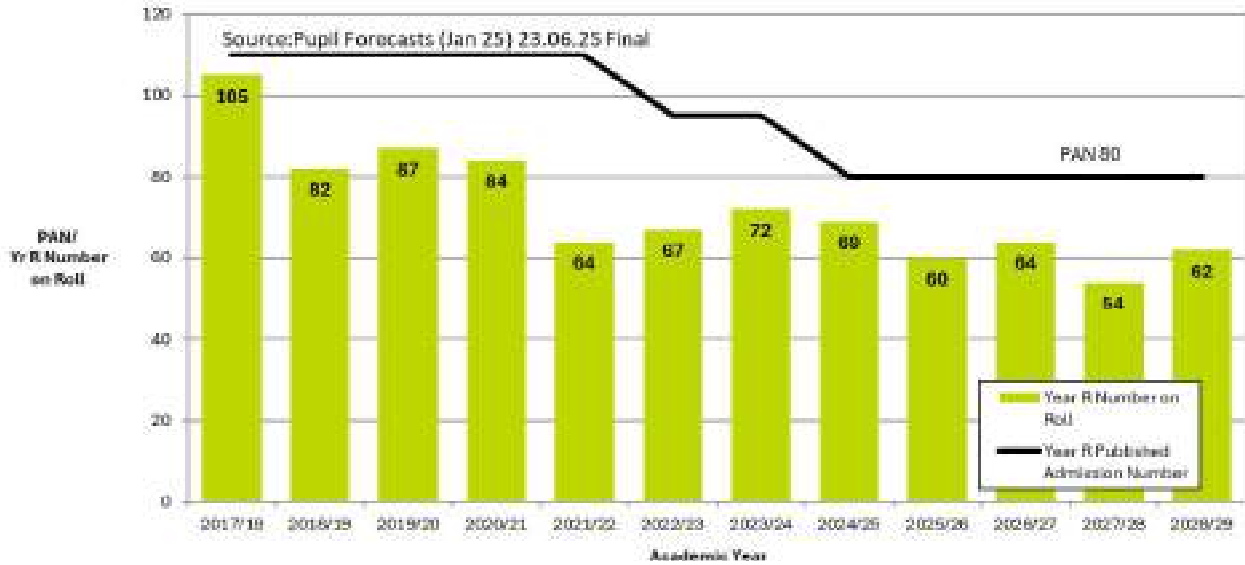
Lower births coupled with a movement of pupils away from Rye Community Primary School to the surrounding schools have resulted in intakes well below the combined Published Admission Number (PAN) of 80 for the area. Forecasts suggest that this trend is likely to continue in the coming years.

### Rye and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	110	105
2018/19	110	82
2019/20	110	87
2020/21	110	84
2021/22	110	64
2022/23	95	67
2023/24	95	72
2024/25	80	69
2025/26	80	60
2026/27	80	64
2027/28	80	54
2028/29	80	62

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Rye and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



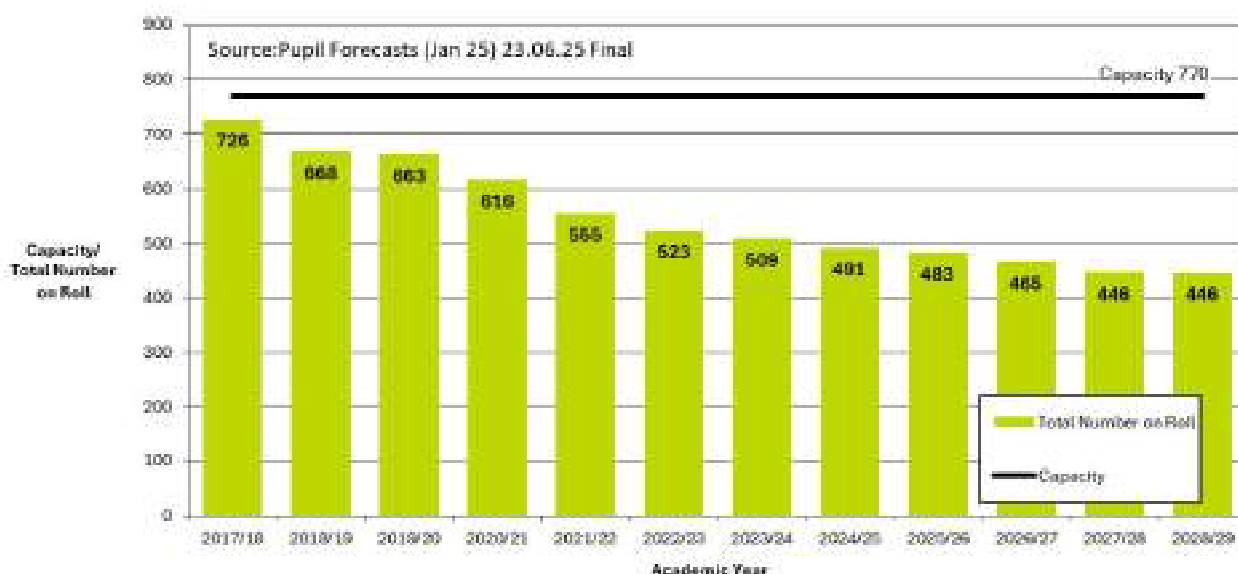
In 2024/25, surplus places in the area stood at 36% and could reach 42% by the end of the plan period. Two schools have surplus places of 25% or more.

### Rye and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	770	726	44	6%
2018/19	770	668	102	13%
2019/20	770	663	107	14%
2020/21	770	616	154	20%
2021/22	770	555	215	28%
2022/23	770	523	247	32%
2023/24	770	509	261	34%
2024/25	770	491	279	36%
2025/26	770	483	287	37%
2026/27	770	465	305	40%
2027/28	770	446	324	42%
2028/29	770	446	324	42%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Rye and surrounding area total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

Reflecting the lower demand for places at Rye Community Primary School, the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust has, in recent years, reduced the PAN at the school initially from 60 to 45 and subsequently from 45 to 30. Accommodation has not been removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers start to rise again.

The local authority is working with all small schools with large surpluses as part of our Small Schools Strategy and will take action where appropriate to address any challenges.

### Secondary places

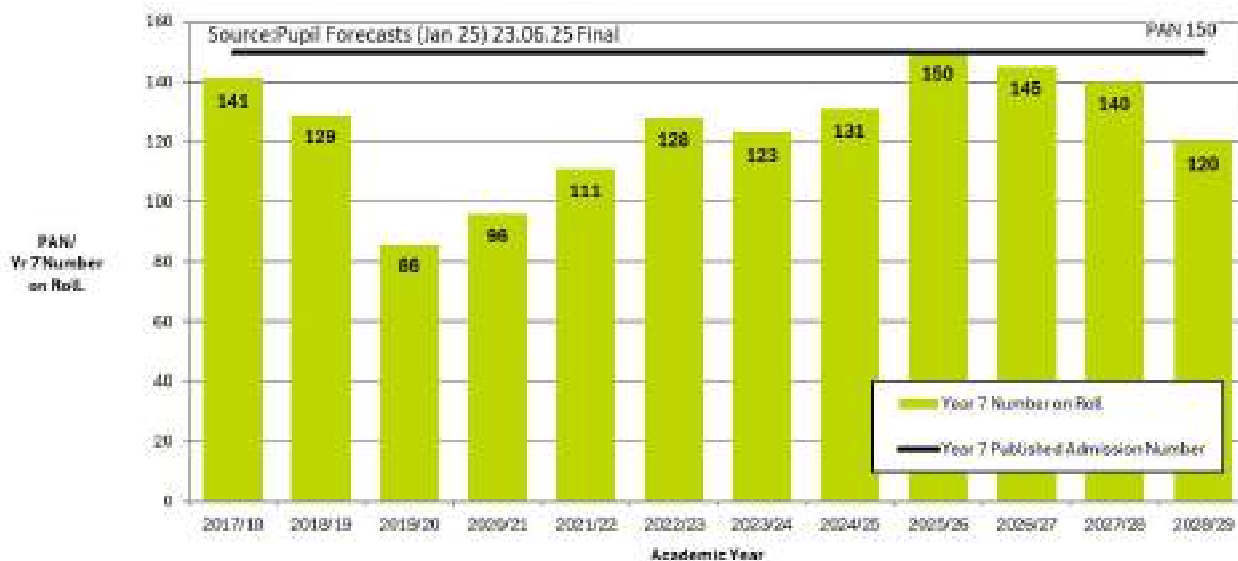
Rye College traditionally has in-area numbers well below its PAN and has relied on attracting children from Hastings and across the border in Kent. The school has filled to its PAN in 2025/26, and intakes are expected to remain high in 2026/27 and 2027/28. From 2028/29 intakes are forecast to fall away owing to lower in-area numbers and lower demand from surrounding areas.

#### Rye College secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	150	141
2018/19	150	129
2019/20	150	86
2020/21	150	96
2021/22	150	111
2022/23	150	128
2023/24	150	123
2024/25	150	131
2025/26	150	150
2026/27	150	145
2027/28	150	140
2028/29	150	120

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Rye College secondary Year 7 numbers



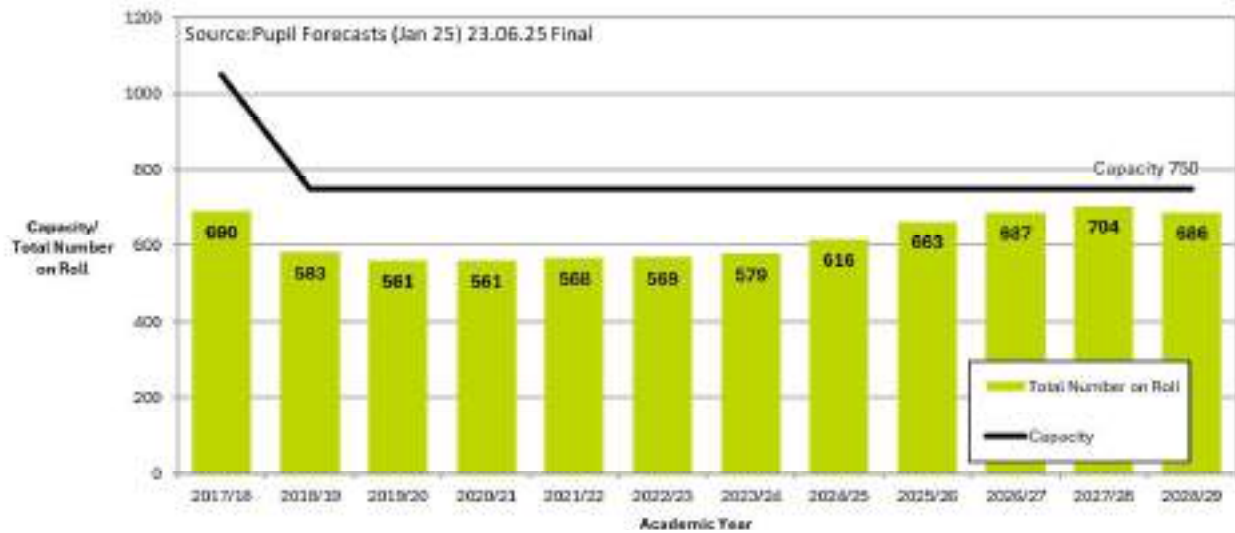
Total pupil numbers at Rye College are forecast to increase as a result of the higher intakes but will still be below the school's capacity of 750.

### Rye College total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1050	690	360	34%
2018/19	750	583	167	22%
2019/20	750	561	189	25%
2020/21	750	561	189	25%
2021/22	750	568	182	24%
2022/23	750	569	181	24%
2023/24	750	579	171	23%
2024/25	750	616	134	18%
2025/26	750	663	87	12%
2026/27	750	687	63	8%
2027/28	750	704	46	6%
2028/29	750	686	64	9%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Rye College total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned for the area.

# Rural Rother

## Schools

There are 18 primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Four primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Beckley Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Bodiam Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Brede Primary School	4-11	Community
Burwash CE School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Crowhurst CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Dallington Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Etchingham Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Guestling Bradshaw Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Hurst Green Church of England Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Academy
Icklesham Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Netherfield CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Northiam Church of England Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Academy
Salehurst Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Sedlescombe CE Primary School	4-11	Academy
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Stonegate Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Westfield School	4-11	Community
<b>Secondary</b>		
Robertsbridge Community College	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

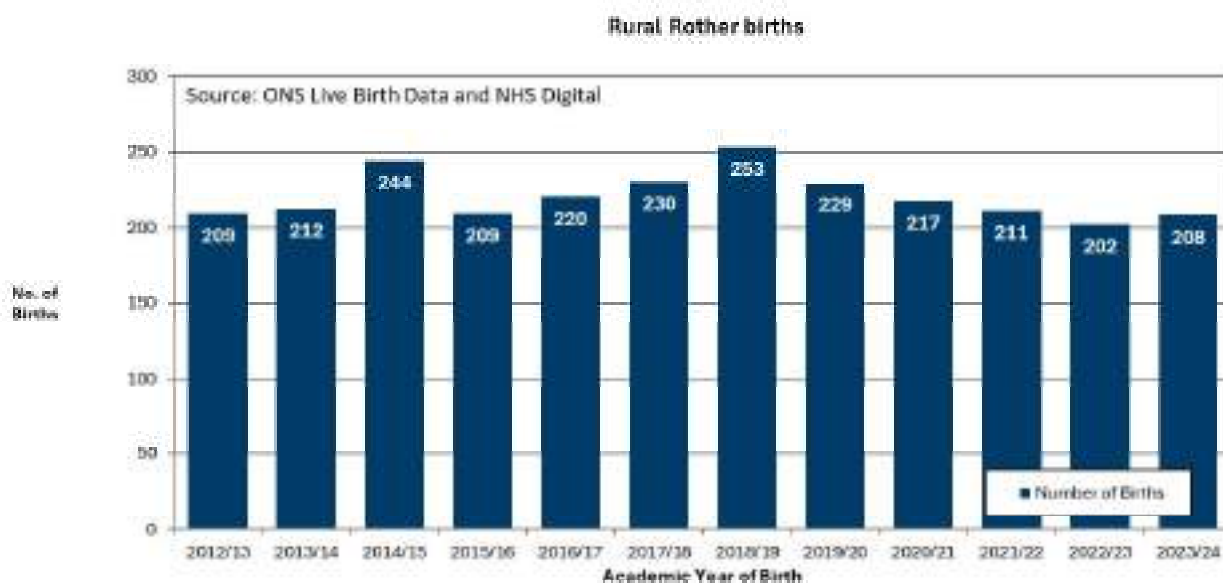
## Births

Births in the area have fallen in recent years, however, figures for 2023/24 are slightly up on 2022/23. Whether this is the start of an upturn or simply a blip is uncertain at this time.

Rural Rother births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	209
2013/14	212
2014/15	244
2015/16	209
2016/17	220
2017/18	230
2018/19	253
2019/20	229
2020/21	217
2021/22	211
2022/23	202
2023/24	208

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Rother District Council (RDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. An estimated 300 new homes are projected to be built in the area during the remainder of the existing Local Plan period 2025/26 to 2027/28. RDC is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this plan.

## Primary places

The 375 reception (Year R) places in primary schools across the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future.

However, the picture will vary between individual rural areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate significantly from year to year, owing to the fact that the size of the cohorts of children living in small geographical areas sometimes differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise to accommodate any temporary bulges.

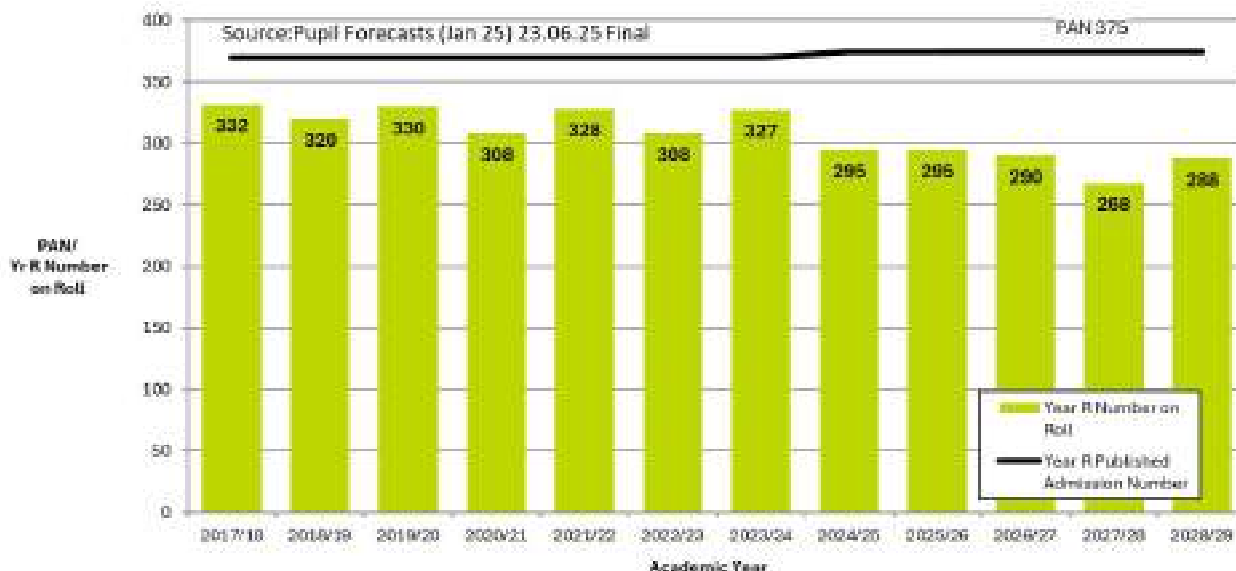
The following primary schools all take significant numbers of children from Hastings: Crowhurst CE Primary School, Guestling-Bradshaw CE Primary School, Icklesham CE Primary School, Netherfield CE Primary School, Sedlescombe CE Primary School, and Westfield School. Falling pupil outflows from Hastings, because of lower numbers there, may result in some of these schools not filling as they normally do.

#### Rural Rother primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	370	332
2018/19	370	320
2019/20	370	330
2020/21	370	308
2021/22	370	328
2022/23	370	308
2023/24	370	327
2024/25	375	295
2025/26	375	295
2026/27	375	290
2027/28	375	268
2028/29	375	288

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Rural Rother primary Year R numbers



Surplus places for the area stood at 16% in 2024/25. By 2028/29 they are forecast to rise to 21%. Four schools had 25% or more surplus places in 2024/25.

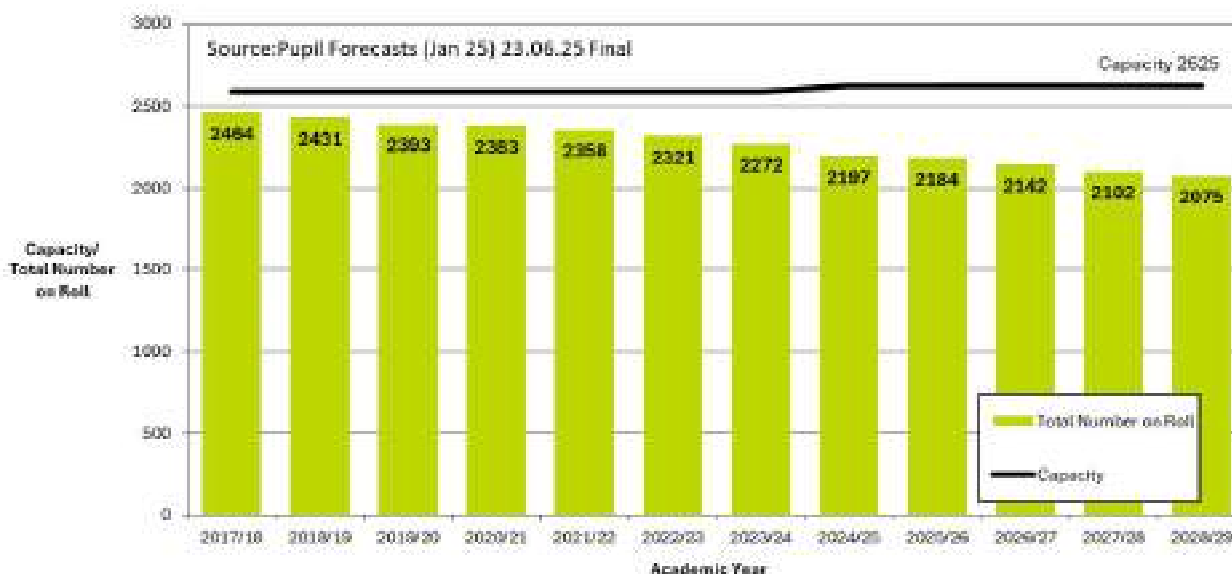
#### Rural Rother total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	2590	2464	126	5%

2018/19	2590	2431	159	6%
2019/20	2590	2393	197	8%
2020/21	2590	2383	207	8%
2021/22	2590	2358	232	9%
2022/23	2590	2321	269	10%
2023/24	2590	2272	318	12%
2024/25	2625	2197	428	16%
2025/26	2625	2184	441	17%
2026/27	2625	2142	483	18%
2027/28	2625	2102	523	20%
2028/29	2625	2075	550	21%

Source: ESCC Pupil Forecasts (January 2024) 03.07.24

Rural Rother total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

Of the four schools with 25% or more surplus places in 2024/25, three were local authority maintained, and one was an academy. The local authority is working with all small schools with large surpluses as part of our Small Schools Strategy. We will monitor the situation at the three maintained schools and take action where appropriate to address any challenges. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with the trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

## Secondary places

Robertsbridge Community College received an Inadequate Ofsted Rating in April 2024 which has affected its popularity for the 2025/26 academic year, with Year 7 numbers significantly below its Published Admission Number (PAN). The school converted to an academy in March 2025 under the Aquinas Trust. It remains to be seen how long it will take for the school to regain its previous popularity. The school has enough places to meet in-area demand.

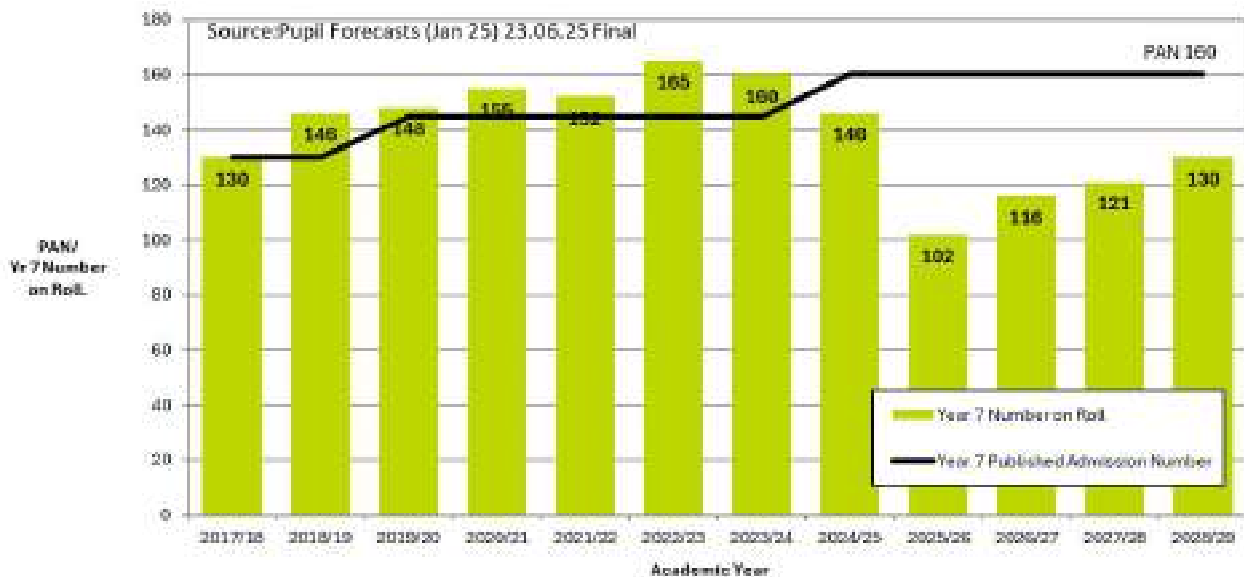
Robertsbridge Community College secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
---------------	-----	----------------

2017/18	130	130
2018/19	130	146
2019/20	145	148
2020/21	145	155
2021/22	145	152
2022/23	145	165
2023/24	145	160
2024/25	160	146
2025/26	160	102
2026/27	160	116
2027/28	160	121
2028/29	160	130

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

#### Robertsbridge Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



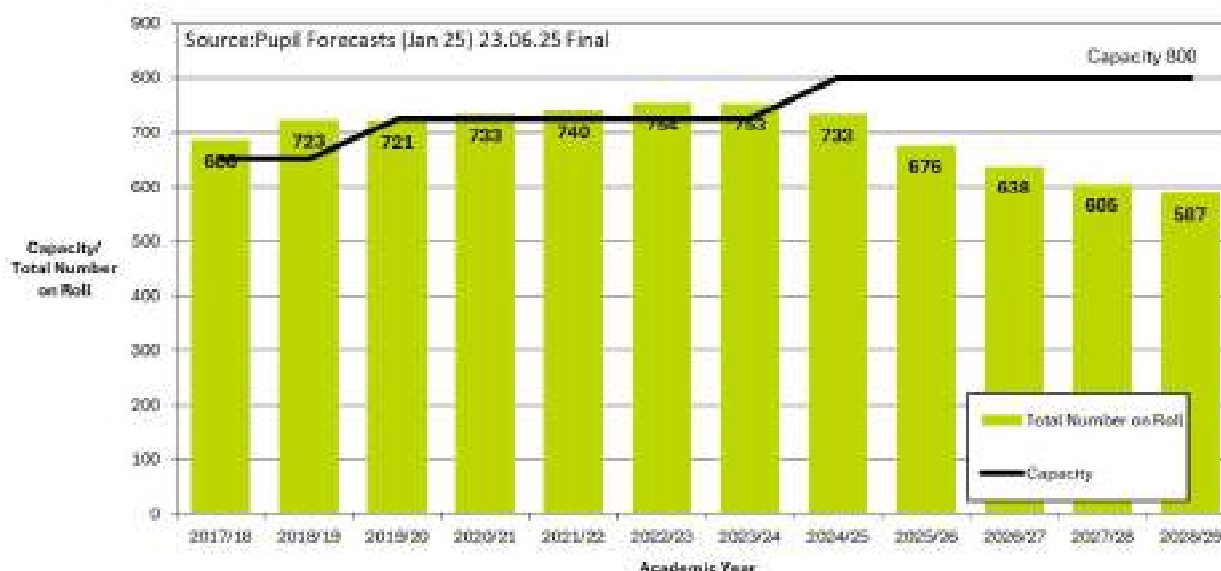
Having been largely full in recent years, surplus places at the school stood at 8% in 2024/25. Largely based on the speculative Year 7 forecasts set, they are predicted to rise to 27% by 2028/29.

**Robertsbridge Community College total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	650	686	(36)	(6%)
2018/19	650	723	(73)	(11%)
2019/20	725	721	4	1%
2020/21	725	733	(8)	(1%)
2021/22	725	740	(15)	(2%)
2022/23	725	754	(29)	(4%)
2023/24	725	753	(28)	(4%)
2024/25	800	733	67	8%
2025/26	800	676	124	16%
2026/27	800	638	162	20%
2027/28	800	605	195	24%
2028/29	800	587	213	27%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Robertsbridge Community College total secondary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned.

# Crowborough and surrounding area

## Schools

There are six primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision. The secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Ashdown Primary School	4-11	Community
Jarvis Brook Primary School	2-11	Academy
Rotherfield Primary School	4-11	Community
Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
St John's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Marys Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
<b>Secondary</b>		
Beacon Academy	11-18	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

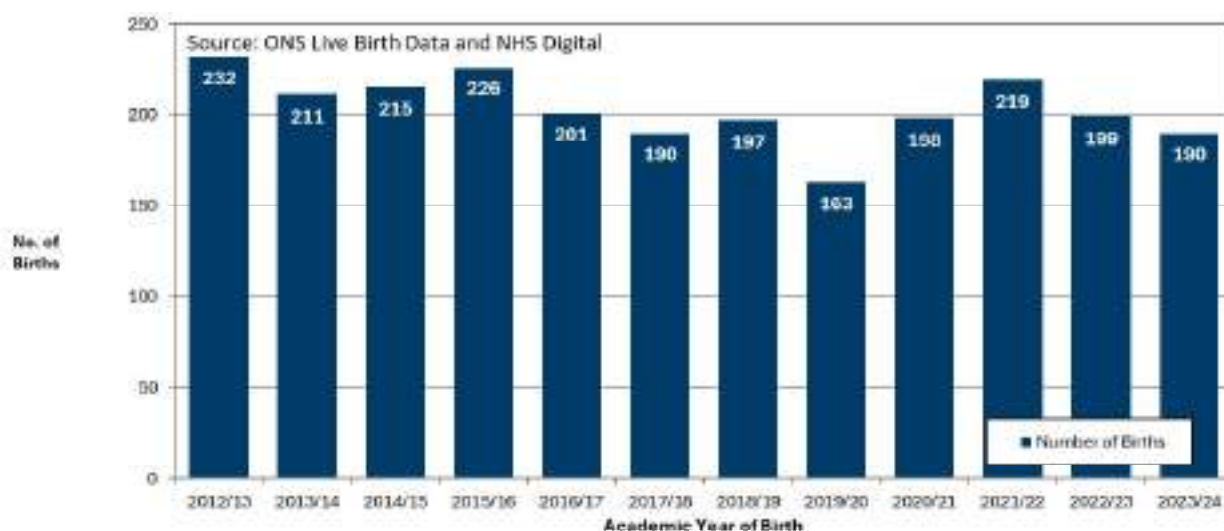
Births in the area have been largely consistent in recent years.

### Crowborough and surrounding area births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	232
2013/14	211
2014/15	215
2015/16	226
2016/17	201
2017/18	190
2018/19	197
2019/20	163
2020/21	198
2021/22	219
2022/23	199
2023/24	190

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

Crowborough and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 800 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

Based on birth and GP registration data, for the foreseeable future, reception (Year R) numbers in the area are likely to fall well below the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 240.

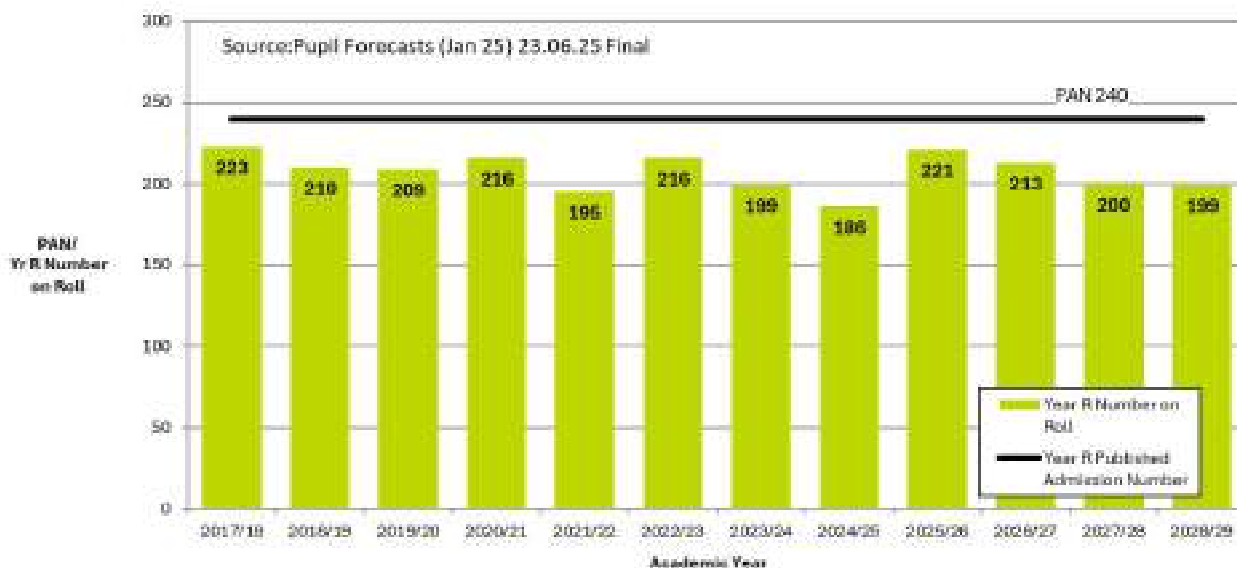
A number of children from the area currently attend surrounding schools, most notably High Hurstwood CE Primary School.

### Crowborough and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	240	223
2018/19	240	210
2019/20	240	209
2020/21	240	216
2021/22	240	195
2022/23	240	216
2023/24	240	199
2024/25	240	186
2025/26	240	221
2026/27	240	213
2027/28	240	200
2028/29	240	199

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Crowborough and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



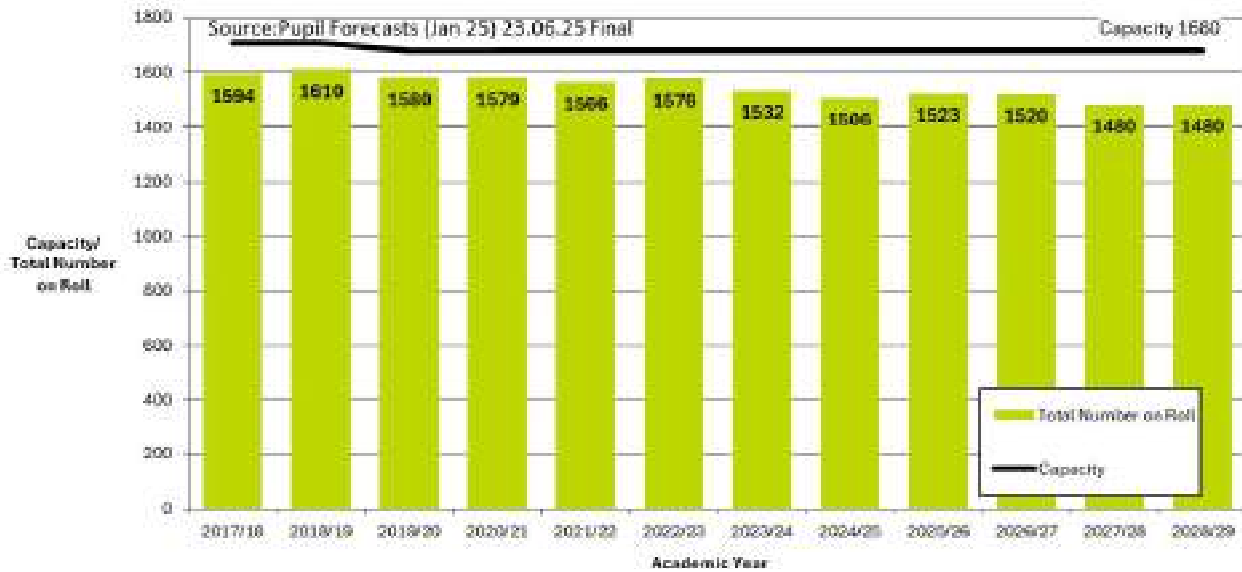
Overall pupil numbers in the area are forecast to fall away gradually during the plan period, with surplus places growing from 10% in 2024/25 to 12% by 2028/29. One school has surplus places of 25% or more.

### Crowborough and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1710	1594	116	7%
2018/19	1710	1610	100	6%
2019/20	1680	1580	100	6%
2020/21	1680	1579	101	6%
2021/22	1680	1566	114	7%
2022/23	1680	1576	104	6%
2023/24	1680	1532	148	9%
2024/25	1680	1506	174	10%
2025/26	1680	1523	157	9%
2026/27	1680	1520	160	10%
2027/28	1680	1480	200	12%
2028/29	1680	1480	200	12%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Crowborough and surrounding area total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The maintained schools in the area are largely full. The school with high surplus places is an academy. Although decisions on managing surplus capacity in an academy rests with the relevant academy trust, the local authority will work with the trust to explore potential solutions where appropriate.

## Secondary places

There are outflows of pupils from the local area to schools in Kent, including the Grammar schools. The village of Forest Row is in a joint school admissions area with Beacon Academy and Chailey School. Beacon Academy is the closer school to Forest Row. Many Forest Row children traditionally receive offers of places at Sackville School and Imberhorne School in East Grinstead, West Sussex.

Since 2019/20, Year 7 intakes to Beacon Academy have significantly exceeded the school's PAN of 250. From 2023/24, the school's admissions policy changed so priority is only given to siblings of children at the school who live 'in-area' rather than all siblings. This is helping to limit the number of out of area applicants the school has to accommodate.

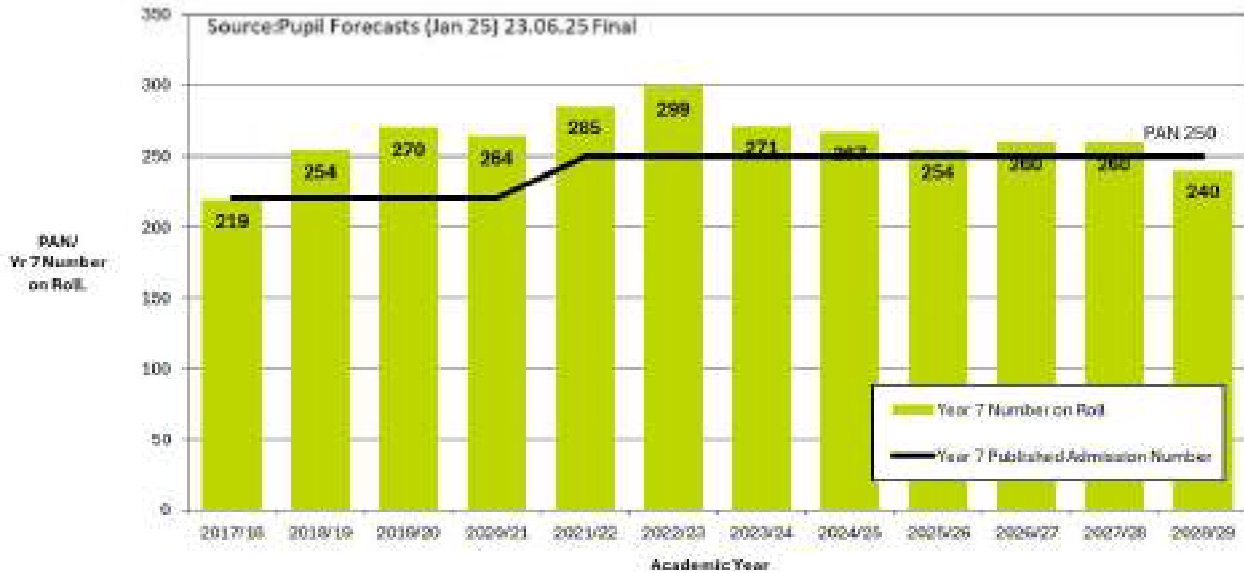
Numbers of pupils coming through primary schools in the area over the next few years are likely to be generally lower than in recent years. As a result, future Year 7 numbers are forecast not to be as high as they have been recently. However, in the short term it may still be difficult for the school to keep to its PAN of 250.

**Beacon Academy secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	220	219
2018/19	220	254
2019/20	220	270
2020/21	220	264
2021/22	250	285
2022/23	250	299
2023/24	250	271
2024/25	250	267
2025/26	250	254
2026/27	250	260
2027/28	250	260
2028/29	250	240

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Beacon Academy secondary Year 7 numbers**



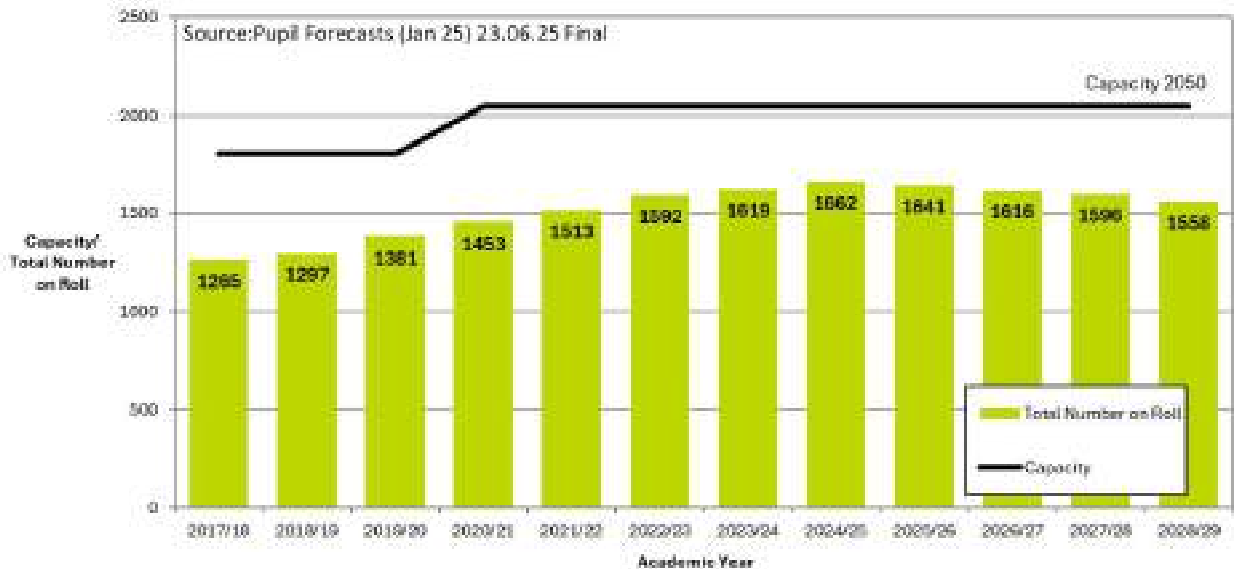
Overall pupil numbers at the school look to have peaked in 2024/25 and are predicted to gradually fall away during the plan period. As a result, surplus places, which stood at 19% in 2024/25 could increase to 24% by 2028/29.

**Beacon Academy total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1800	1265	535	30%
2018/19	1800	1297	503	28%
2019/20	1800	1381	419	23%
2020/21	2050	1453	597	29%
2021/22	2050	1513	537	26%
2022/23	2050	1592	458	22%
2023/24	2050	1619	431	21%
2024/25	2050	1662	388	19%
2025/26	2050	1641	409	20%
2026/27	2050	1616	434	21%
2027/28	2050	1596	454	22%
2028/29	2050	1558	492	24%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Beacon Academy total secondary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned.

# Hailsham and surrounding area

## Schools

There are six primary schools in the area and one all through school (primary, secondary and sixth form). Three schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Grovelands Community Primary School	2-11	Academy
Hawkes Farm Academy	4-11	Academy
Hellingly Community Primary School	4-11	Academy
Park Mead Primary School	4-11	Community
Thornton Grove Academy	3-11	Academy
White House Academy	4-11	Academy
<b>All-through</b>		
Hailsham Academy	2-18	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

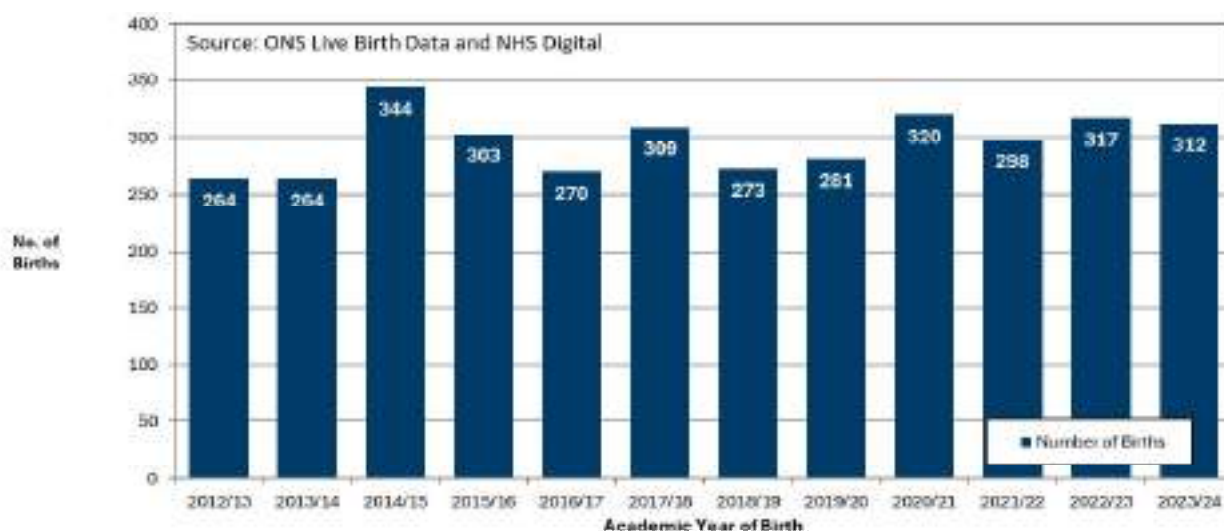
Births in the area have risen in recent years reflecting the significant number of new homes that have been built in Hailsham.

### Hailsham and surrounding area births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	264
2013/14	264
2014/15	344
2015/16	303
2016/17	270
2017/18	309
2018/19	273
2019/20	281
2020/21	320
2021/22	298
2022/23	317
2023/24	312

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Hailsham and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 3,400 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

On 1 September 2025, Phoenix Academy and Burfield Academy merged to form a new primary school - Thornton Grove Academy - operating from the Phoenix site. This reduced the Published Admission Number (PAN) in the area from 345 places to 315.

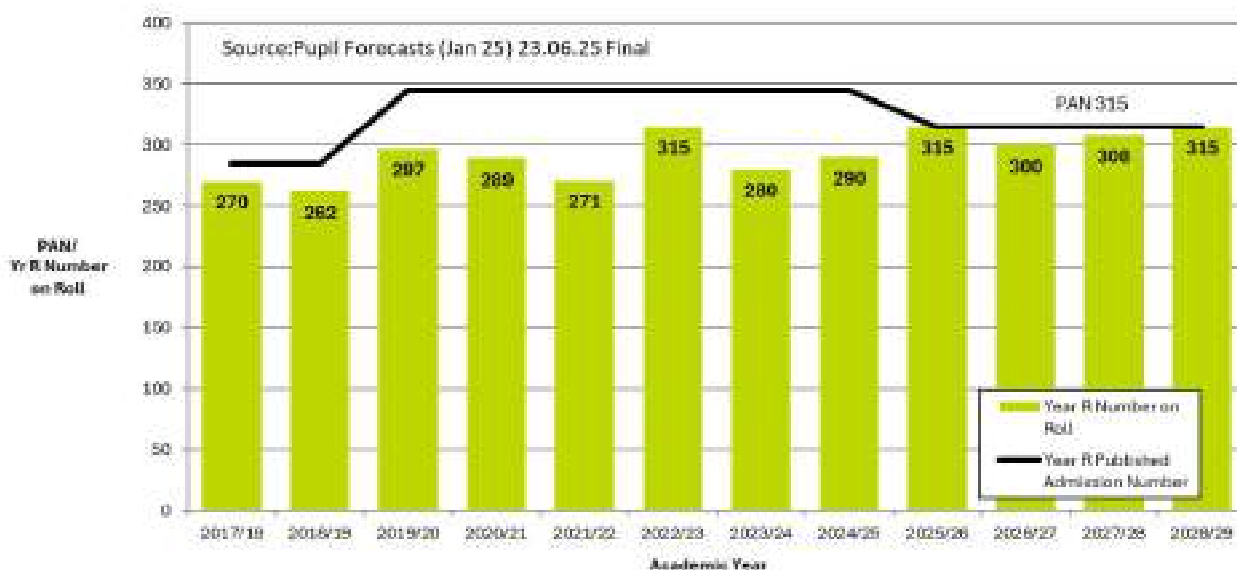
The lower PAN is forecast to be sufficient to meet demand up until the end of the decade. However, with the number of new homes planned for the area over this period, it is possible that the PAN could be exceeded in any of these years or beyond.

### Hailsham and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	285	270
2018/19	285	262
2019/20	345	297
2020/21	345	289
2021/22	345	271
2022/23	345	315
2023/24	345	280
2024/25	345	290
2025/26	315	315
2026/27	315	300
2027/28	315	308
2028/29	315	315

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Hailsham and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



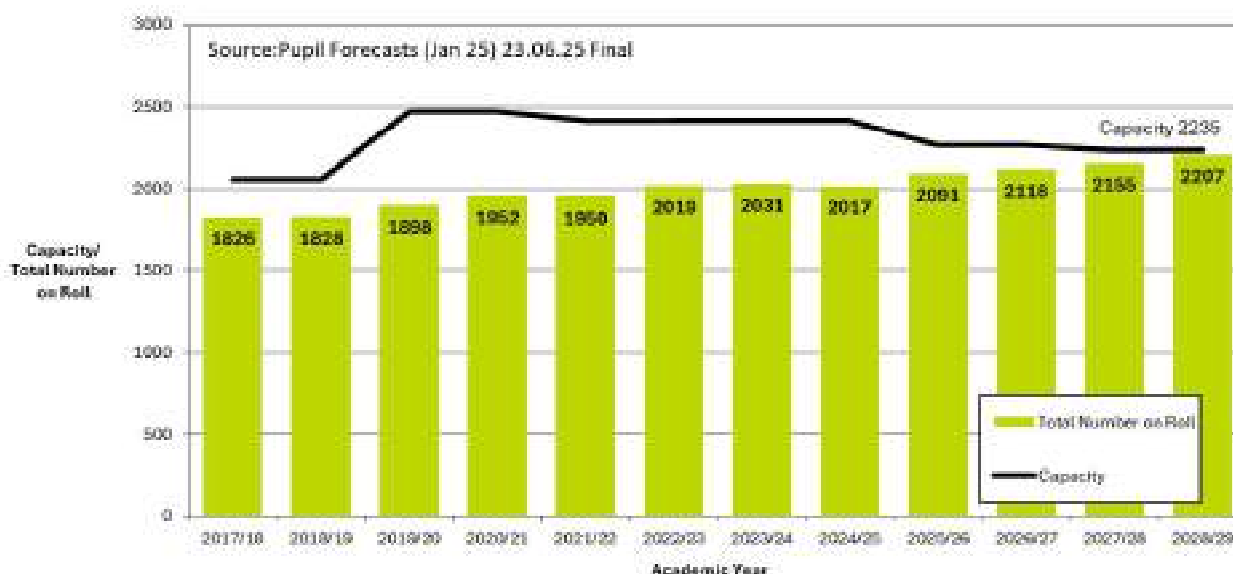
In 2024/25, surplus places in the town stood at 16%. With the loss of capacity resulting from Phoenix Academy and Burfield Academy merging, Hailsham Academy having cohorts in each of its primary year groups from 2025/26, and pupils arising from new housing, surplus places in the area are forecast to fall to 1% by 2028/29.

### Hailsham and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	2055	1826	229	11%
2018/19	2055	1828	227	11%
2019/20	2475	1898	577	23%
2020/21	2475	1952	523	21%
2021/22	2415	1950	465	19%
2022/23	2415	2019	396	16%
2023/24	2415	2031	384	16%
2024/25	2415	2017	398	16%
2025/26	2265	2091	174	8%
2026/27	2265	2118	147	7%
2027/28	2235	2155	80	4%
2028/29	2235	2207	28	1%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Hailsham and surrounding area total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No further primary school organisation changes are currently planned.

## Secondary places

As a result of rising numbers coming through primary schools and additional pupils generated by the volume of new housing being built in the town, there are higher numbers of in-area children than previously. However, a substantial number of children from the area take up places at surrounding schools, notably Heathfield Community College, Kings Academy Ringmer, Willingdon Community School and schools in Eastbourne and this has had an impact on Year 7 intakes to Hailsham Academy.

In response to these lower levels of demand, the academy trust has taken the decision to lower the school’s PAN from 300 to 240 from 2026/27. It remains to be seen whether 240 Year 7 places will be adequate to meet demand. The forecasts currently show the lowered PAN being exceeded in some of the coming years, but what happens in reality will depend heavily on future patterns of parental preference.

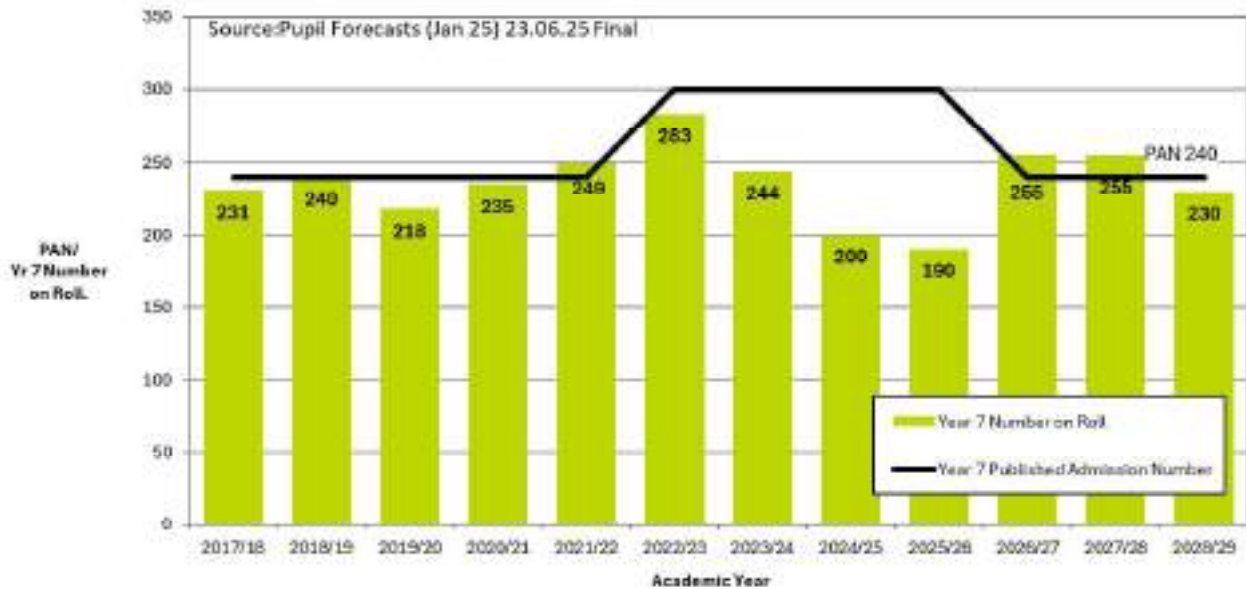
The number of new homes being built in the area will also have a significant bearing on future numbers at the school.

## Hailsham Academy secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	240	231
2018/19	240	240
2019/20	240	218
2020/21	240	235
2021/22	240	249
2022/23	300	283
2023/24	300	244
2024/25	300	200
2025/26	300	190
2026/27	240	255
2027/28	240	255
2028/29	240	230

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Hailsham Academy secondary Year 7 numbers



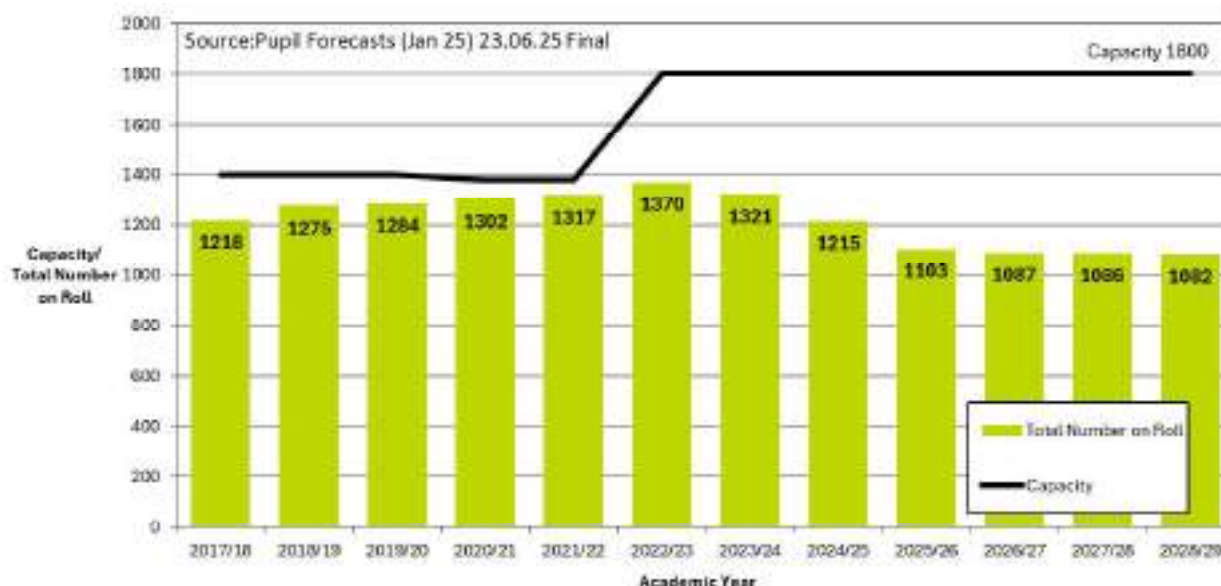
Overall pupil numbers at the school are forecast to fall in the plan period, with surplus places growing from 33% in 2024/25 to 40% by 2028/29.

## Hailsham Academy total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1400	1218	182	13%
2018/19	1400	1275	125	9%
2019/20	1400	1284	116	8%
2020/21	1380	1302	78	6%
2021/22	1380	1317	63	5%
2022/23	1800	1370	430	24%
2023/24	1800	1321	479	27%
2024/25	1800	1215	585	33%
2025/26	1800	1103	697	39%
2026/27	1800	1087	713	40%
2027/28	1800	1086	714	40%
2028/29	1800	1082	718	40%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Hailsham Academy total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

Accommodation will not be removed at the school following its PAN reduction in 2026/27 and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers begin to rise again in the future.

On 1 September 2025, Hailsham Academy joined Mark Academy Trust, having previously been a single academy trust.

Hailsham Academy's sixth form is undergoing a phased closure. There is no Year 12 intake for 2025/26, and the sixth form will close completely on 31 August 2026.

# Heathfield

## Schools

There are three primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision. The secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
All Saints' & St Richard's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Parkside Community Primary School	2-11	Community
<b>Secondary</b>		
Heathfield Community College	11-18	Community

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

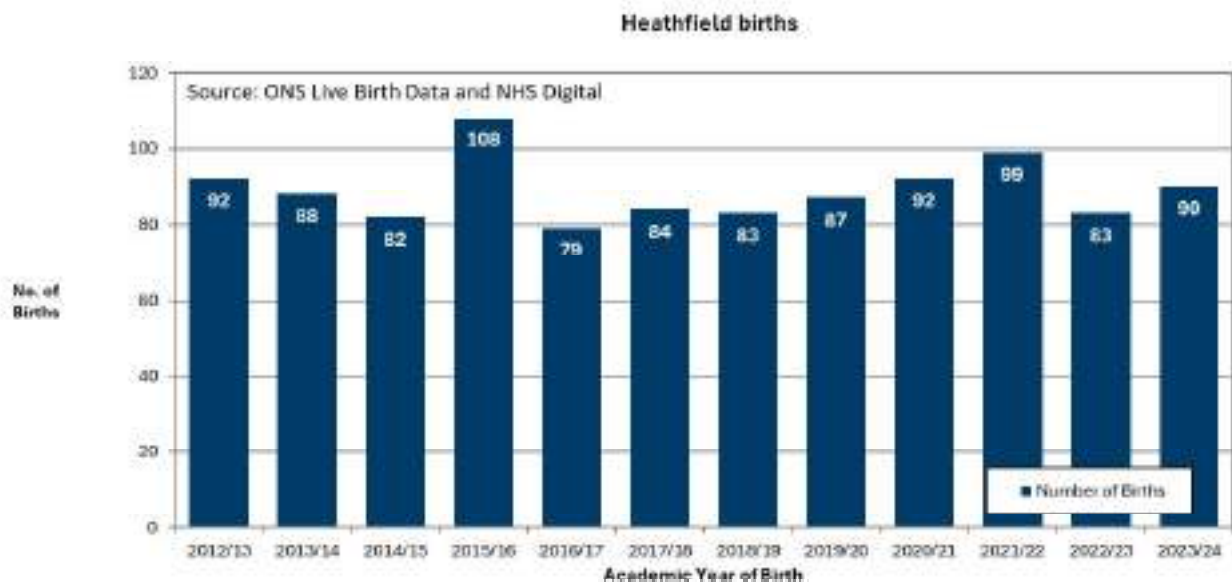
## Births

Births in the area have averaged 89 per annum over the last 12 years.

### Heathfield births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	92
2013/14	88
2014/15	82
2015/16	108
2016/17	79
2017/18	84
2018/19	83
2019/20	87
2020/21	92
2021/22	99
2022/23	83
2023/24	90

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 300 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

There is movement of children between Heathfield and the following schools: Maynard’s Green Community Primary School, Punnetts Town Community Primary School, and from schools in Hailsham.

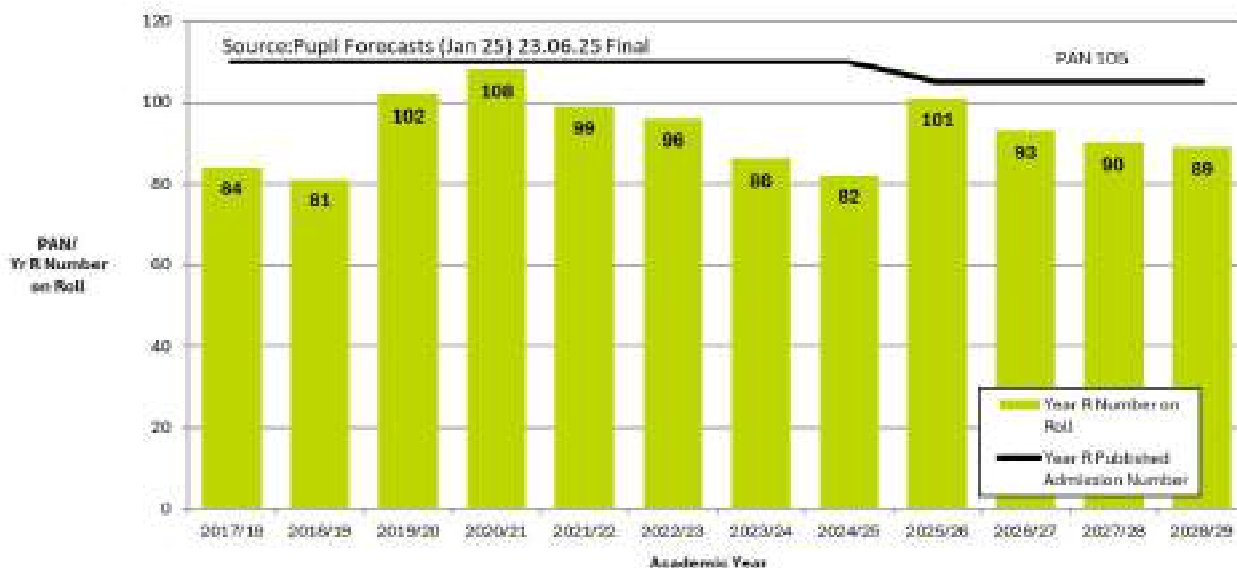
Reception (Year R) numbers in the area are forecast to remain within the reduced Published Admission Number (PAN) of 105 for the foreseeable future.

### Heathfield primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	110	84
2018/19	110	81
2019/20	110	102
2020/21	110	108
2021/22	110	99
2022/23	110	96
2023/24	110	86
2024/25	110	82
2025/26	105	101
2026/27	105	93
2027/28	105	90
2028/29	105	89

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Heathfield primary Year R numbers



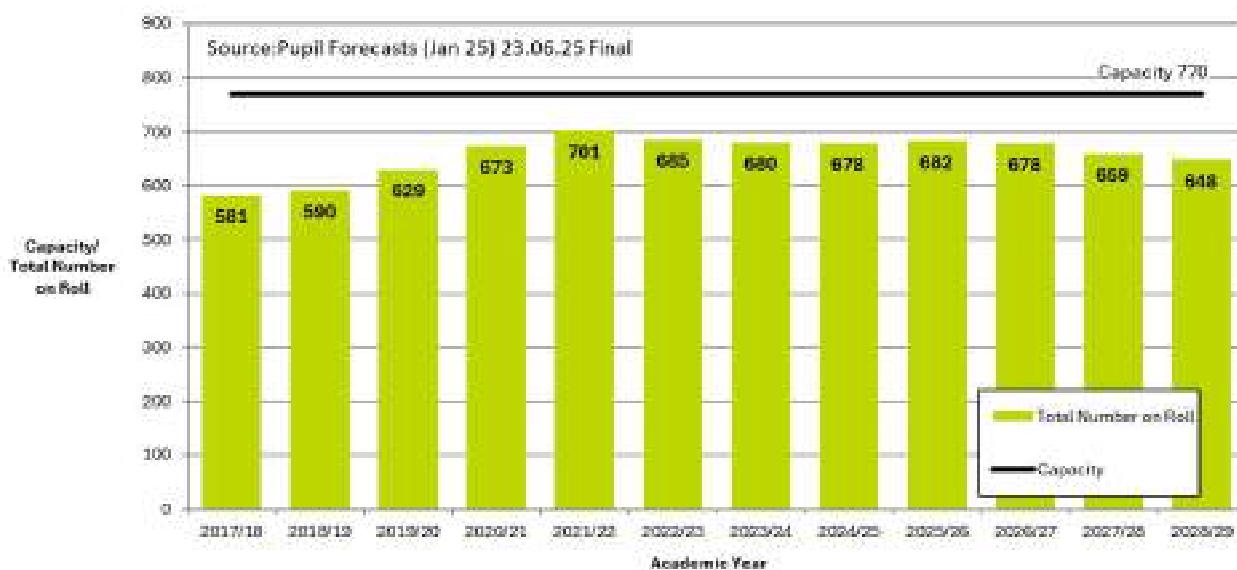
Overall pupil numbers should remain steady until 2027/28 when they are likely to fall away slightly. Surplus places, which stood at 12% in 2024/25, are forecast to grow to 16% by the end of the plan period. One school in the area has 25% or more surplus places.

### Heathfield total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	770	581	189	25%
2018/19	770	590	180	23%
2019/20	770	629	141	18%
2020/21	770	673	97	13%
2021/22	770	701	69	9%
2022/23	770	685	85	11%
2023/24	770	680	90	12%
2024/25	770	678	92	12%
2025/26	770	682	88	11%
2026/27	770	678	92	12%
2027/28	770	659	111	14%
2028/29	770	648	122	16%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Heathfield total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The governing board of All Saints and St Richards CE Primary School took the decision to reduce its PAN from 20 to 15 with effect from 2025/26. Accommodation has not been removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers begin to rise again.

## Secondary places

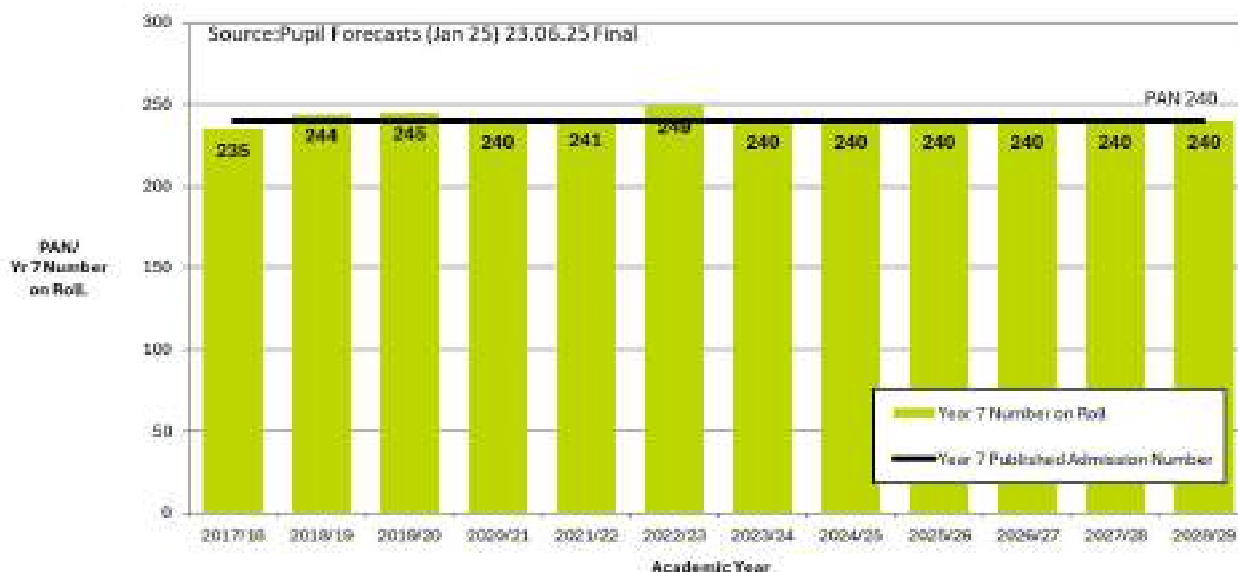
Parts of Heathfield Community College’s admissions community area overlaps with those of Hailsham Academy, Uplands Academy and Robertsbridge Community College. The school takes significant numbers of pupils from Hailsham and the surrounding area. With inflows of pupils from these areas, it is forecast that the school will continue to fill to its PAN for the foreseeable future.

### Heathfield Community College secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	240	235
2018/19	240	244
2019/20	240	245
2020/21	240	240
2021/22	240	241
2022/23	240	249
2023/24	240	240
2024/25	240	240
2025/26	240	238
2026/27	240	240
2027/28	240	240
2028/29	240	240

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Heathfield Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



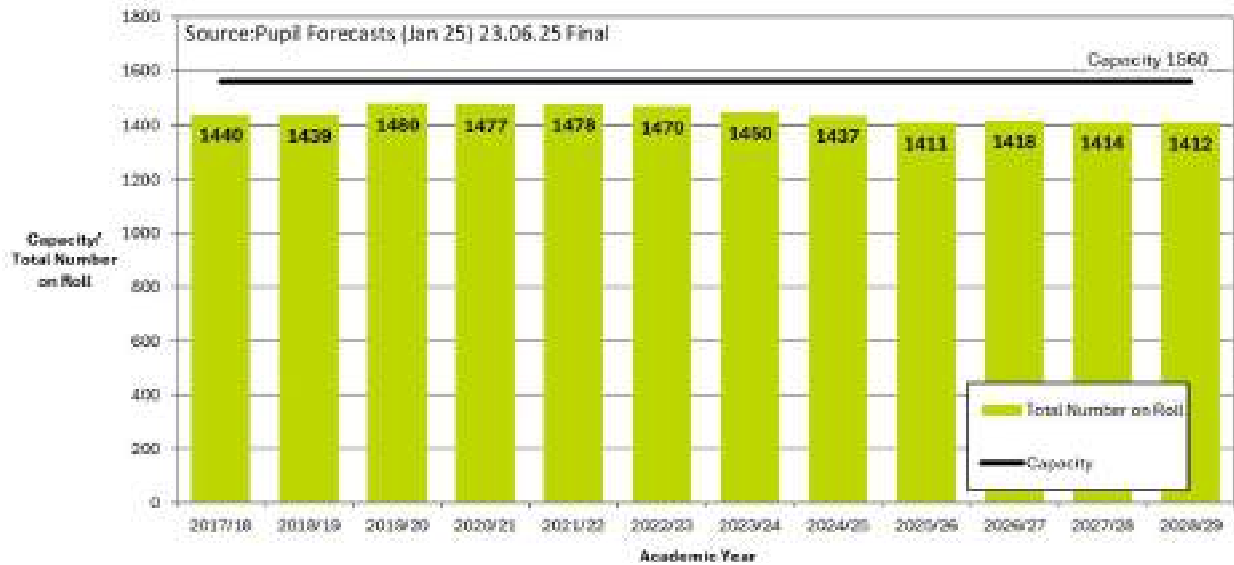
Heathfield Community College has sufficient places to meet in-area demand. The potential for the school admissions system to redirect out of area applicants back to Hailsham and other areas means that the school is unlikely to have to exceed capacity in future years. As a result, overall numbers at the school are expected to remain consistent until 2028/29, with surplus places of around 8%-10%. Spare places are mainly in the sixth form.

### Heathfield Community College total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1560	1440	120	8%
2018/19	1560	1439	121	8%
2019/20	1560	1480	80	5%
2020/21	1560	1477	83	5%
2021/22	1560	1478	82	5%
2022/23	1560	1470	90	6%
2023/24	1560	1450	110	7%
2024/25	1560	1437	123	8%
2025/26	1560	1411	149	10%
2026/27	1560	1418	142	9%
2027/28	1560	1414	146	9%
2028/29	1560	1412	148	10%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Heathfield Community College total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The local authority has recently agreed to expand Heathfield Community College's specialist facility for students with autism, subject to detailed design and planning. The facility's capacity will increase from 12 places to 20. It is intended to deliver the expansion in 2026/27.

# Polegate and Willingdon

## Schools

There are two primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Polegate Primary School	2-11	Community
Willingdon Primary School	4-11	Community
<b>Secondary</b>		
Willingdon Community School	11-16	Community

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

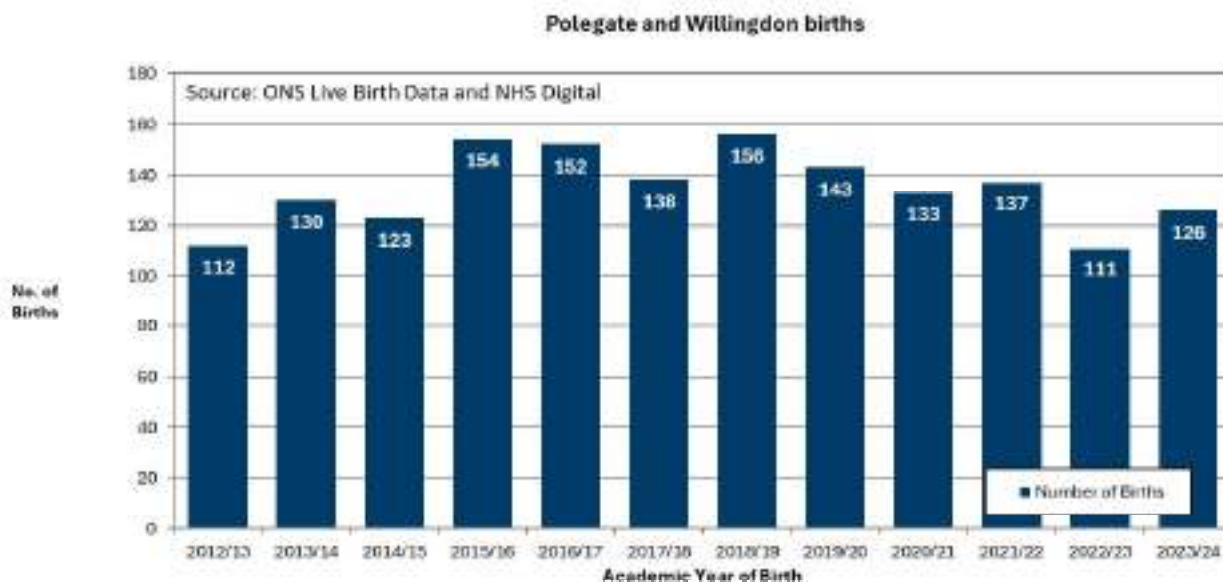
## Births

Following a low birth year in 2022/23, numbers rose again in 2023/24.

### Polegate and Willingdon births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	112
2013/14	130
2014/15	123
2015/16	154
2016/17	152
2017/18	138
2018/19	156
2019/20	143
2020/21	133
2021/22	137
2022/23	111
2023/24	126

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 1,700 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

There are significant flows of children to and from Polegate Primary School and Willingdon Primary School and schools in Eastbourne.

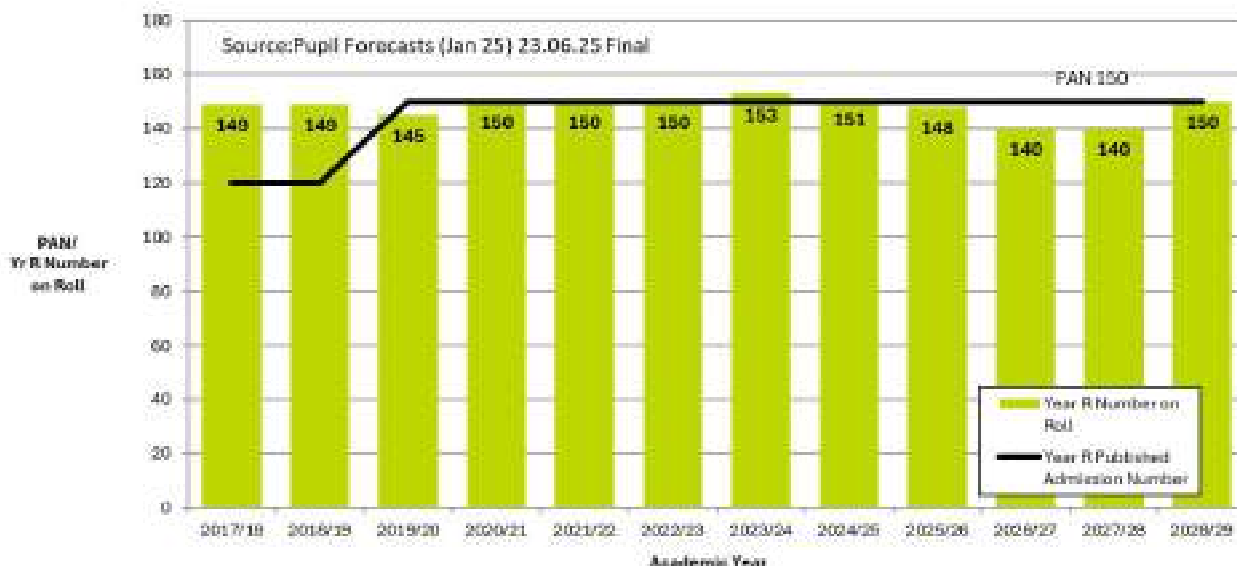
In the short term, birth and GP registration data points to reception (Year R) numbers remaining at or within the combined PAN of 150. However, the housing planned for the area, could lead to medium to long term pressures on places.

### Polegate and Willingdon primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	120	149
2018/19	120	149
2019/20	150	145
2020/21	150	150
2021/22	150	150
2022/23	150	150
2023/24	150	153
2024/25	150	151
2025/26	150	148
2026/27	150	140
2027/28	150	140
2028/29	150	150

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Polegate and Willingdon primary Year R numbers



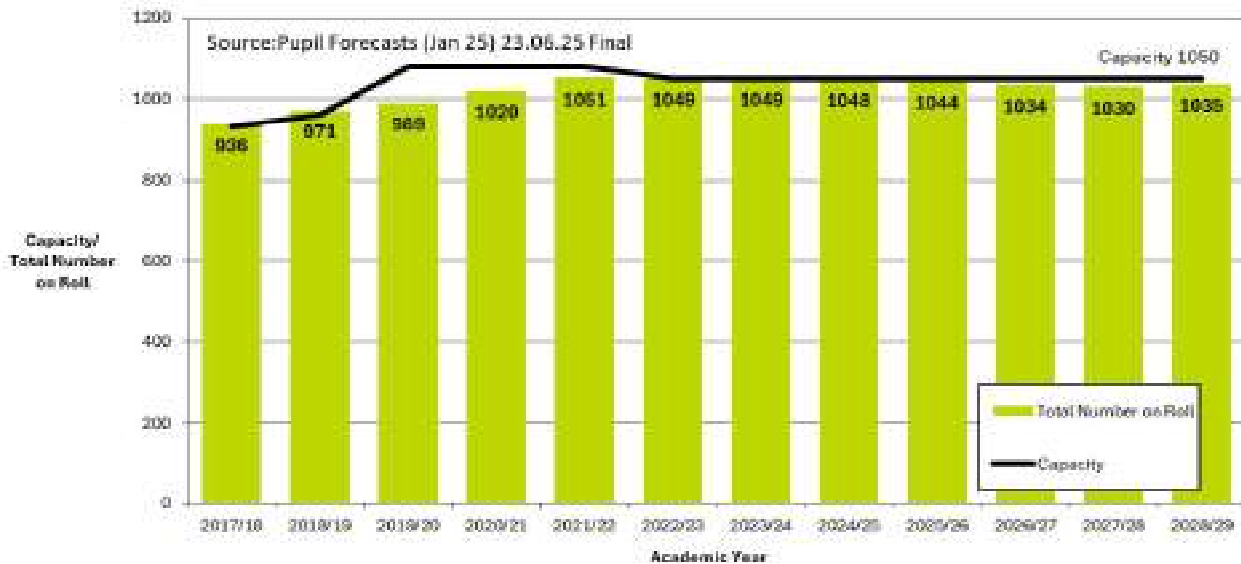
Total pupil numbers in the area should remain relatively consistent in the period to 2028/29, with surplus places of no more than 2%.

## Polegate and Willingdon total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	930	936	(6)	(1%)
2018/19	960	971	(11)	(1%)
2019/20	1080	989	91	8%
2020/21	1080	1020	60	6%
2021/22	1080	1051	29	3%
2022/23	1050	1049	1	0%
2023/24	1050	1049	1	0%
2024/25	1050	1048	2	0%
2025/26	1050	1044	6	1%
2026/27	1050	1034	16	1%
2027/28	1050	1030	20	2%
2028/29	1050	1035	15	1%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Polegate and Willingdon total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No primary school organisation changes are currently planned.

## Secondary places

Linked to numbers coming through primary schools and the volume of recent and planned housing development in the Polegate, Willingdon and Stone Cross areas, Willingdon Community School is likely to find it increasingly difficult to meet demand from all children within its admissions community area who wish to go there. The school exceeded its PAN of 210 by approximately 15 places in 2025/26 as a result of successful appeals.

Willingdon Community School has shared admissions areas with two Eastbourne schools, The Turing School and The Eastbourne Academy. In some years, if Willingdon Community School is to keep to its PAN of 210, the school admissions system may have to direct a number of local applicants from the school's community area to these schools.

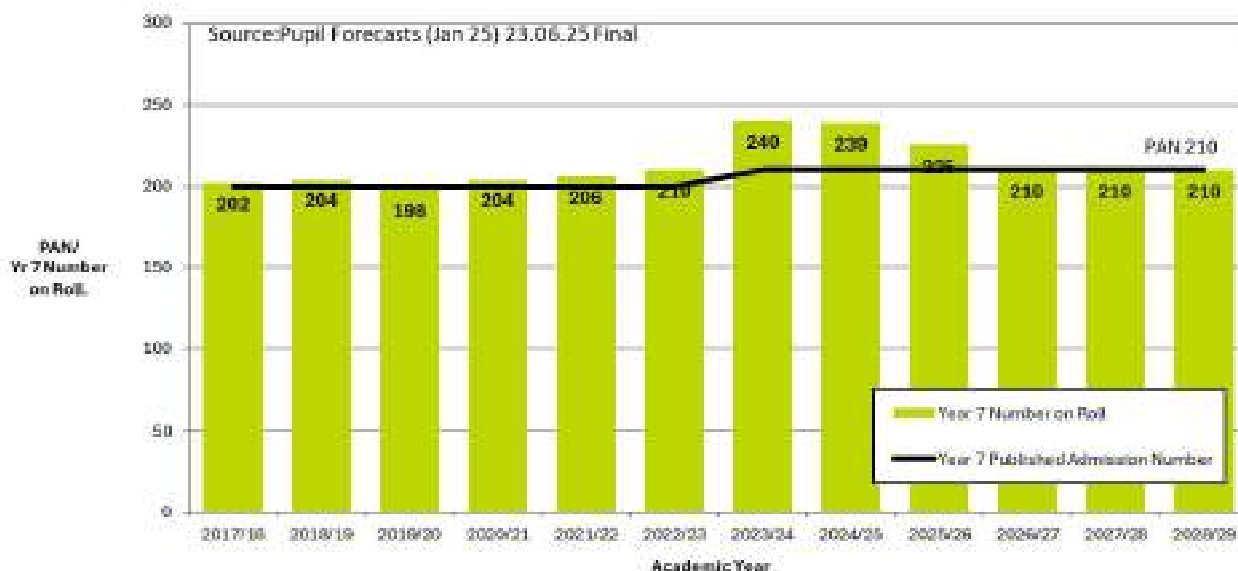


## Willingdon Community School secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	200	202
2018/19	200	204
2019/20	200	198
2020/21	200	204
2021/22	200	206
2022/23	200	210
2023/24	210	240
2024/25	210	239
2025/26	210	225
2026/27	210	210
2027/28	210	210
2028/29	210	210

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Willingdon Community School secondary Year 7 numbers



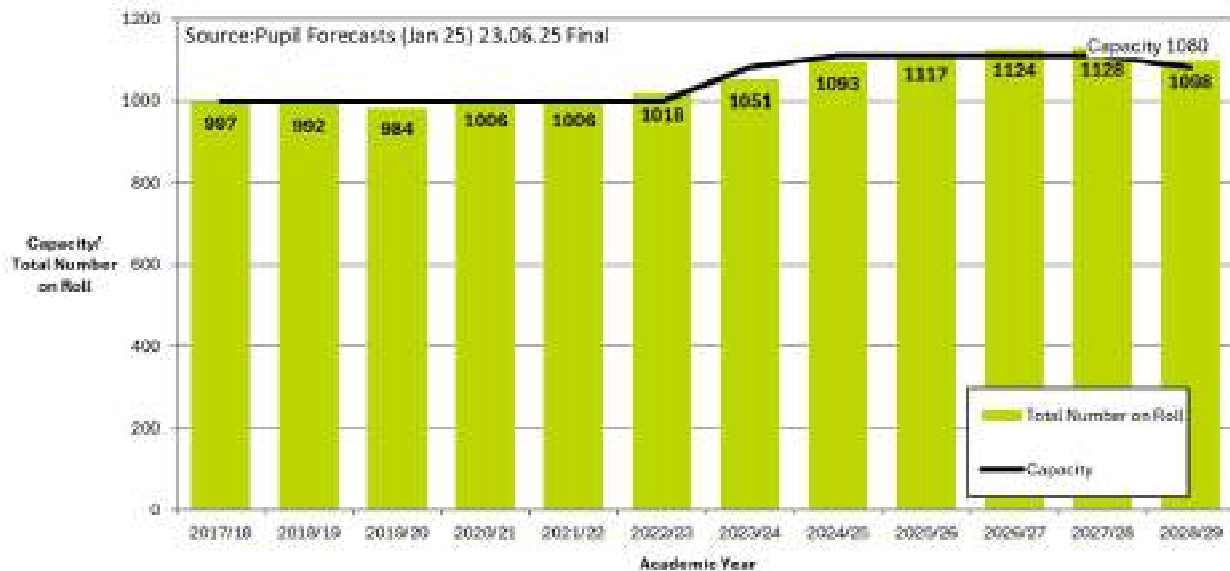
The school is likely to remain at, or close to, capacity during the plan period, with very few, if any, surplus places.

## Willingdon Community School total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1000	997	3	0%
2018/19	1000	992	8	1%
2019/20	1000	984	16	2%
2020/21	1000	1006	(6)	(1%)
2021/22	1000	1006	(6)	(1%)
2022/23	1000	1018	(18)	(2%)
2023/24	1080	1051	29	3%
2024/25	1110	1093	17	2%
2025/26	1110	1117	(7)	(1%)
2026/27	1110	1124	(14)	(1%)
2027/28	1110	1128	(18)	(2%)
2028/29	1080	1098	(18)	(2%)

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

Willingdon Community School total secondary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No secondary school organisation changes are currently planned but the local authority will monitor the local demand for places at the school and take action if necessary.

# Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham

## Schools

There are three primary schools in the area.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Hankham Primary School	4-11	Community
Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Stone Cross School	4-11	Community

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

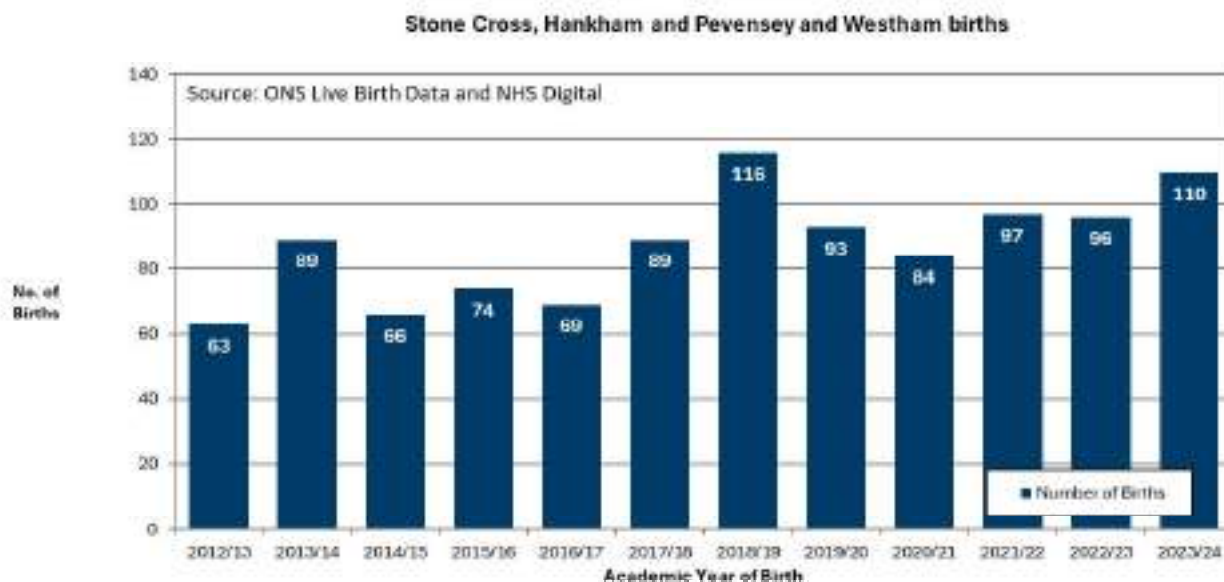
## Births

Births have generally been higher in recent years because of the volume of new homes to have been built in the area.

### Stonecross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	63
2013/14	89
2014/15	66
2015/16	74
2016/17	69
2017/18	89
2018/19	116
2019/20	93
2020/21	84
2021/22	97
2022/23	96
2023/24	110

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 1,300 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

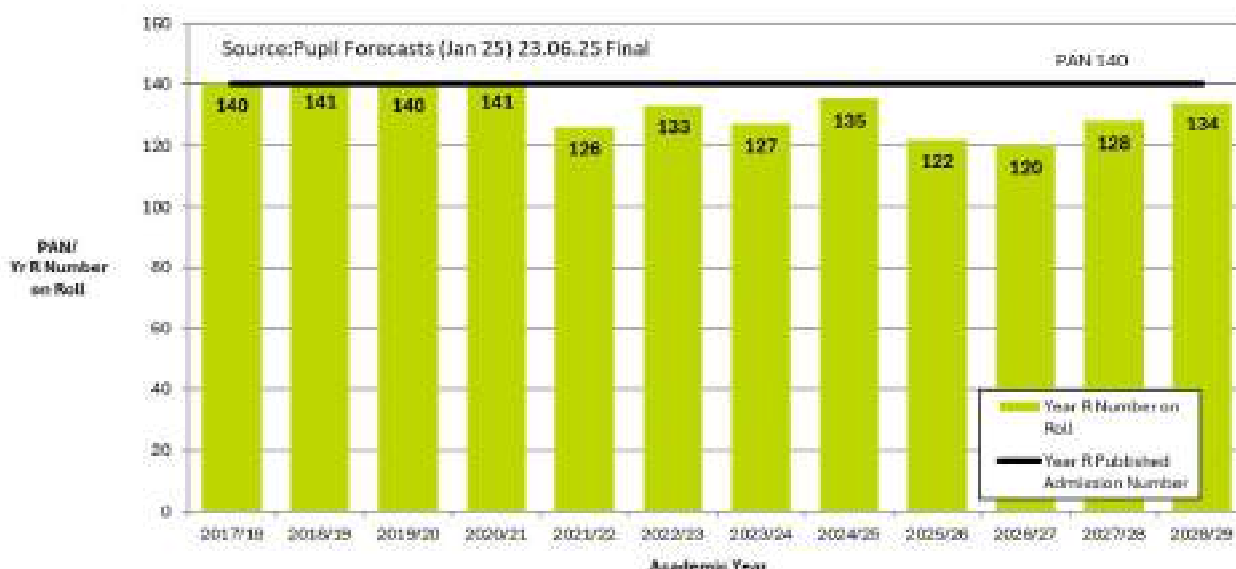
Recent house building in the area has resulted in larger numbers of in-area children coming through into reception (Year R). The three schools take significant numbers of children from the Eastbourne area. The school admissions system should be able to redirect some of this demand back to Eastbourne, where future intake numbers are predicted to decline as a result of falling births, thereby ensuring sufficient places for local children. However, the volume of new housing, coupled with any future general upturn in births, could put pressure on school places in the local area.

### Stonecross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	140	140
2018/19	140	141
2019/20	140	140
2020/21	140	141
2021/22	140	126
2022/23	140	133
2023/24	140	127
2024/25	140	135
2025/26	140	122
2026/27	140	120
2027/28	140	128
2028/29	140	134

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Stone Cross, Hankham and Pevensey and Westham primary Year R numbers



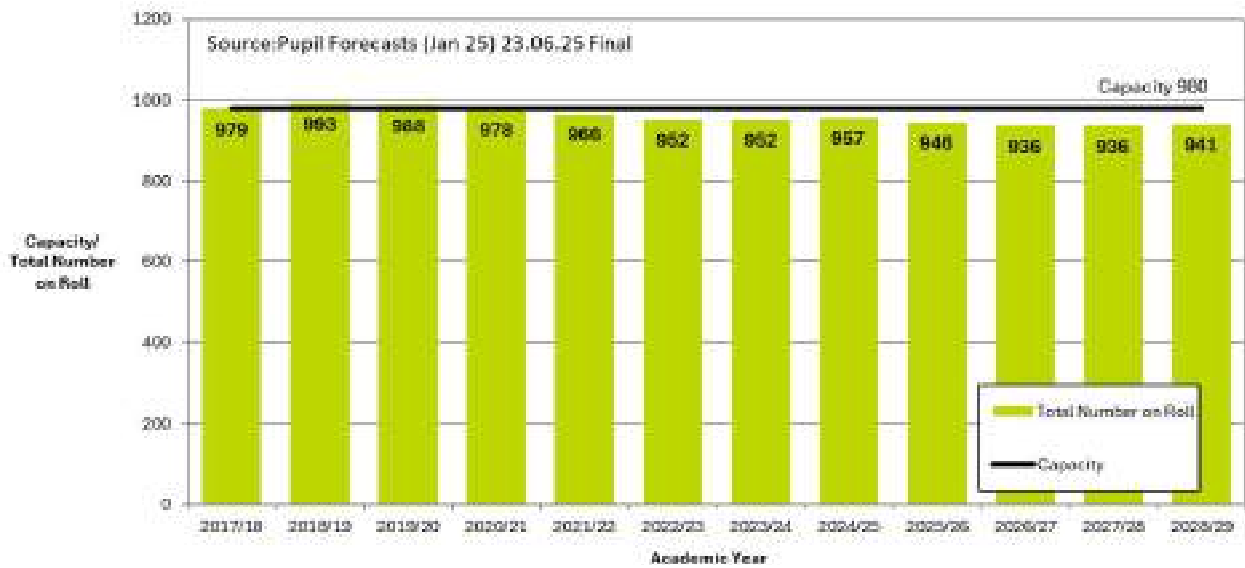
Overall pupil numbers in the three schools are expected to remain consistent until 2028/29, with surplus places averaging around 4%.

**Stonecross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham total primary numbers  
from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	980	979	1	0%
2018/19	980	993	(13)	(1%)
2019/20	980	988	(8)	(1%)
2020/21	980	978	2	0%
2021/22	980	966	14	1%
2022/23	980	952	28	3%
2023/24	980	952	28	3%
2024/25	980	957	23	2%
2025/26	980	946	34	3%
2026/27	980	936	44	5%
2027/28	980	936	44	4%
2028/29	980	941	39	4%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Stone Cross, Hankham and Pevensey and Westham total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School lowered its age range from September 2025 to establish school-run nursery provision on site.

# Uckfield and surrounding area

## Schools

There are six primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Three primary schools have nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary</b>		
Framfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Harlands Primary School	2-11	Community
Little Horsted Church of England Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Aided
Manor Primary School	4-11	Community
Rocks Park Primary School	4-11	Community
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Aided
<b>Secondary</b>		
Uckfield College	11-18	Community

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

## Births

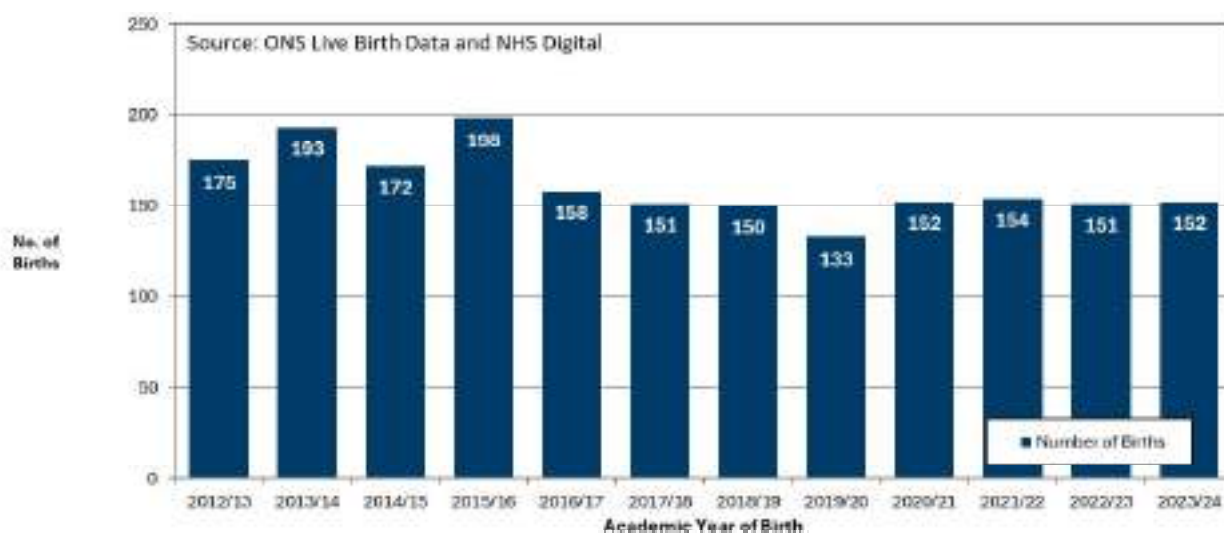
Births in the area have been largely consistent in recent years.

### Uckfield and surrounding area births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	175
2013/14	193
2014/15	172
2015/16	198
2016/17	158
2017/18	151
2018/19	150
2019/20	133
2020/21	152
2021/22	154
2022/23	151
2023/24	152

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital

### Uckfield and surrounding area births



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 1,600 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40.

## Primary places

Live birth and GP registration data are currently suggesting that reception (Year R) numbers should remain under the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the area during the plan period.

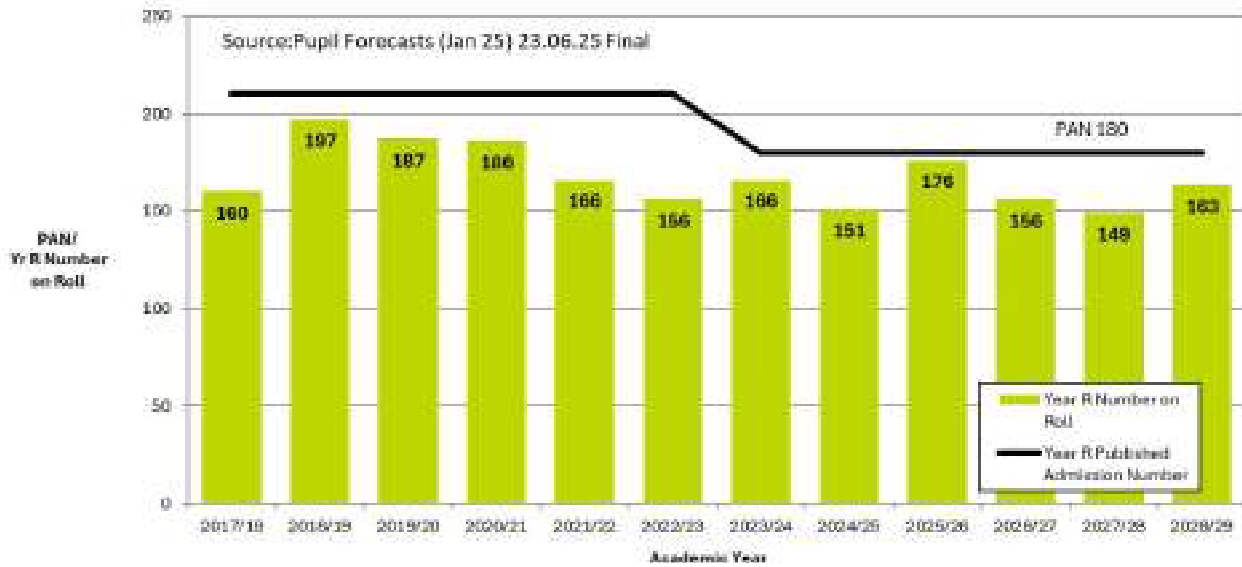
A number of children from the area currently attend surrounding schools, notably Bonners CE Primary School and Buxted CE Primary School.

### Uckfield and surrounding area primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	210	160
2018/19	210	197
2019/20	210	187
2020/21	210	186
2021/22	210	166
2022/23	210	156
2023/24	180	166
2024/25	180	151
2025/26	180	176
2026/27	180	156
2027/28	180	149
2028/29	180	163

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Uckfield and surrounding area primary Year R numbers**



Total primary numbers in the area are expected to decline gradually in the coming years, with surplus places growing from 3% in 2024/25 to 7% in 2028/29.

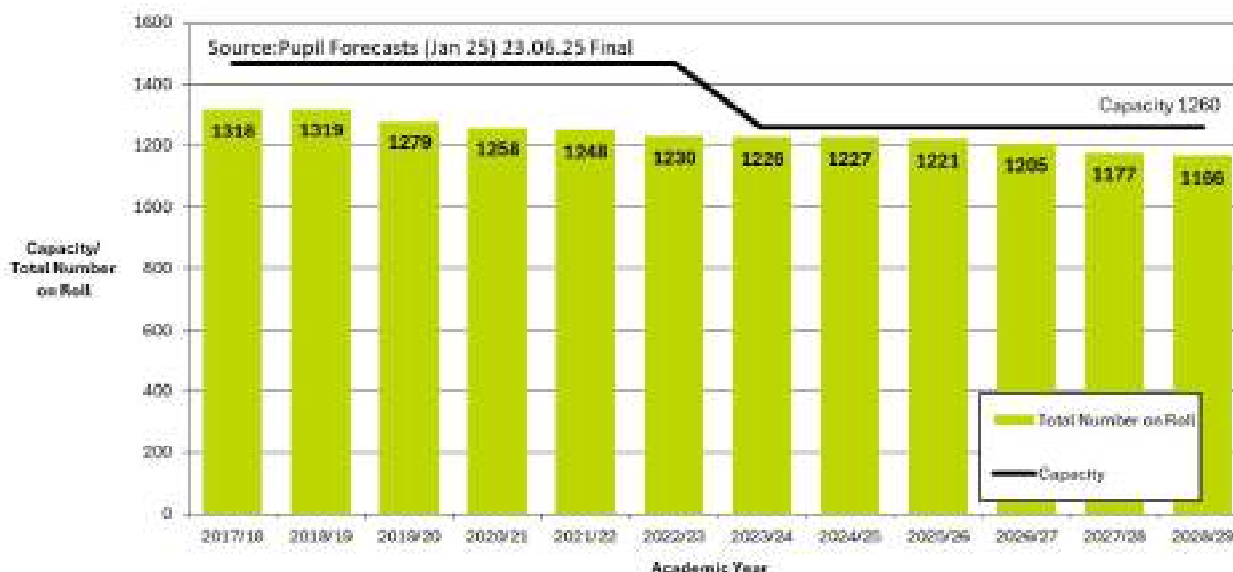
However, 1000 new homes are being built in the town on a housing development at Ridgewood Farm. If accompanied by a general upswing in births, this volume of development is likely to put pressure on school places in the area at some point in the future.

**Uckfield and surrounding area total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1470	1318	152	10%
2018/19	1470	1319	151	10%
2019/20	1470	1279	191	13%
2020/21	1470	1258	212	14%
2021/22	1470	1248	222	15%
2022/23	1470	1230	240	16%
2023/24	1260	1226	34	3%
2024/25	1260	1227	33	3%
2025/26	1260	1221	39	3%
2026/27	1260	1205	55	4%
2027/28	1260	1177	83	7%
2028/29	1260	1166	94	7%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Uckfield and surrounding area total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The local authority has an option agreement on land for a new school to serve the Ridgewood development site and will bring forward proposals to establish provision at the appropriate time. The timing of this will be largely dependent upon when the school site is transferred by the developer to the local authority and the demand for places in the area at that time.

### Secondary places

The popularity of Uckfield College has seen a recent rise, likely linked to the Outstanding Ofsted Grading in 2024. Based on recent parental preference patterns it is currently forecast that the school will fill to its PAN of 270 in most of the years to 2028/29.

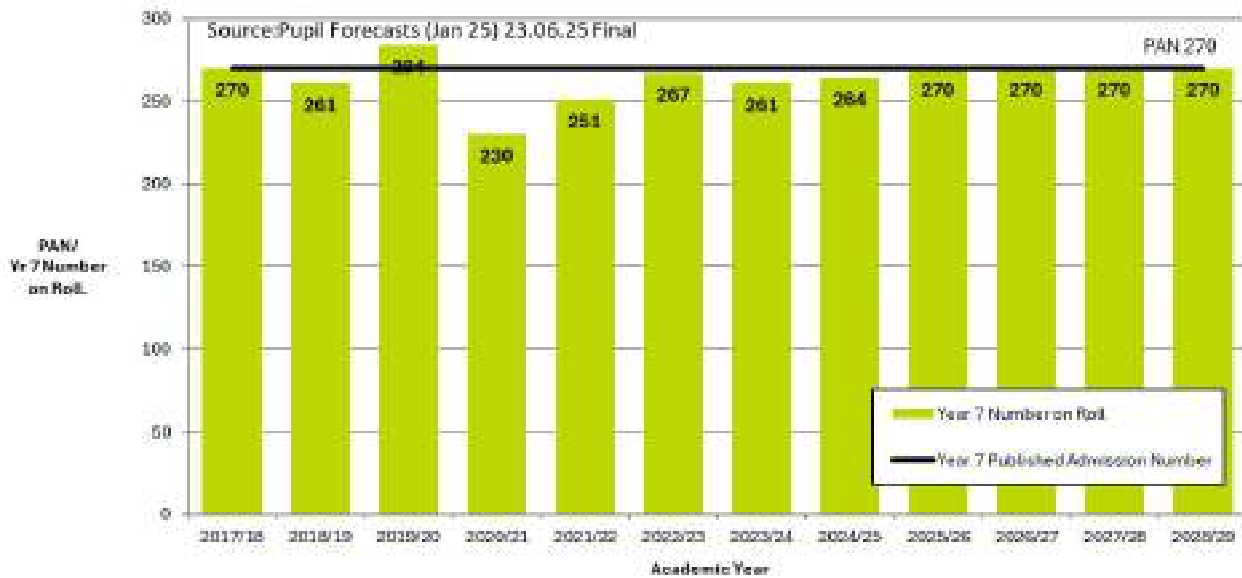
Parts of Uckfield College's admissions area overlap with those of King's Academy, Ringmer. There are inflows and outflows to and from the areas of Ringmer, Chailey and Crowborough. Pupils from the local area also access places at St Paul's Catholic College in West Sussex.

### Uckfield College secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	270	270
2018/19	270	261
2019/20	270	284
2020/21	270	230
2021/22	270	251
2022/23	270	267
2023/24	270	261
2024/25	270	264
2025/26	270	270
2026/27	270	270
2027/28	270	270
2028/29	270	270

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25

Uckfield College secondary Year 7 numbers



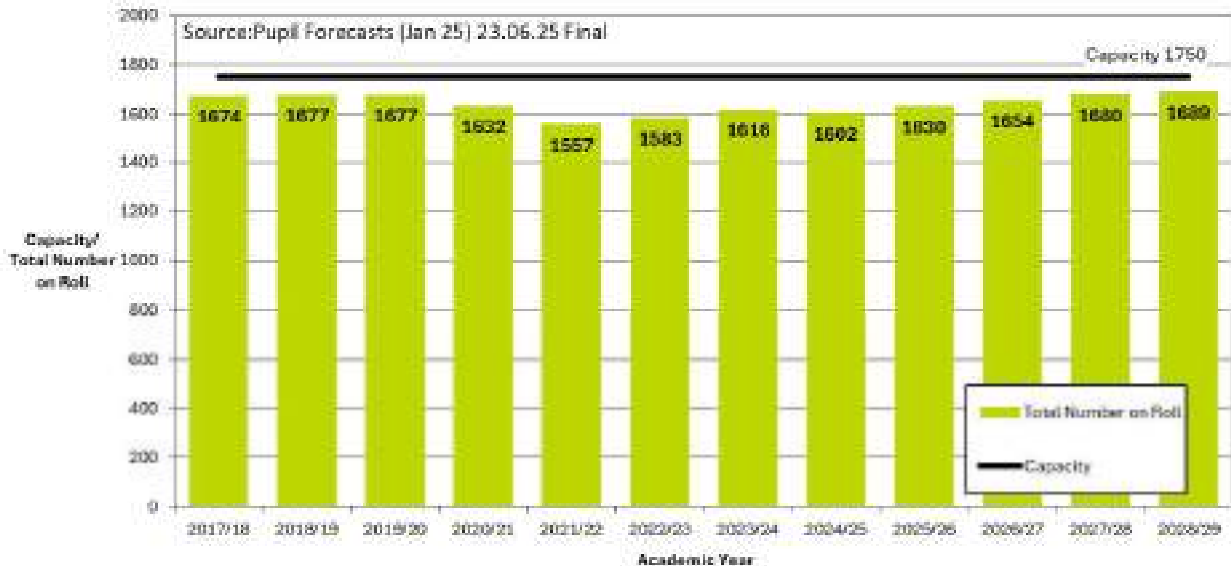
Overall pupil numbers at the school are forecast to grow gradually during the plan period. Surplus places, which stood at 8% in 2024/25, are expected to reduce to 3% by 2028/29.

**Uckfield College total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1750	1674	76	4%
2018/19	1750	1677	73	4%
2019/20	1750	1677	73	4%
2020/21	1750	1632	118	7%
2021/22	1750	1557	193	11%
2022/23	1750	1583	167	10%
2023/24	1750	1616	134	8%
2024/25	1750	1602	148	8%
2025/26	1750	1630	120	7%
2026/27	1750	1654	96	5%
2027/28	1750	1680	70	4%
2028/29	1750	1689	61	3%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Uckfield College total secondary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The local authority is working with Uckfield College on a project to expand its specialist facility for students with autism, thereby increasing its capacity from 6 places to 12. The project is due to complete in autumn 2025.

# Rural Wealden

## Schools

There are 24 primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Four primary schools have nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
<b>Primary schools</b>		
Alfriston School	4-11	Community
Blackboys Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Bonnars CE School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Buxted CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chiddingly Primary School	4-11	Community
Danehill Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
East Hoathly CE Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Controlled
Five Ashes CE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Fletching Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Forest Row Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Frant Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Groombridge St Thomas' Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Laughton Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Mayfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Maynards Green Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Nutley Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Punnetts Town Community Primary School	2-11	Community
St Mark's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Michael's Primary School	4-11	Community
Wadhurst CE Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
<b>Secondary schools</b>		
Uplands Academy	11-16	Academy

\*School type correct on 1 October 2025

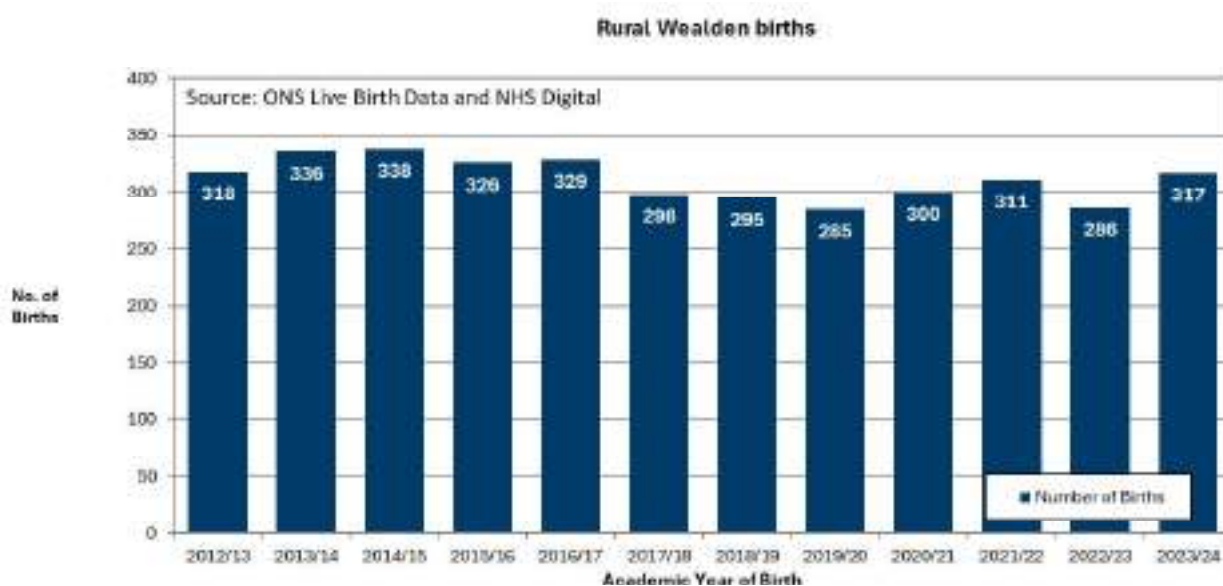
## Births

Births across the area have been relatively steady in the last seven years with an average of 299 per annum.

### Rural Wealden births from 2012/13 to 2023/24

Academic year	Number of births
2012/13	318
2013/14	336
2014/15	338
2015/16	326
2016/17	329
2017/18	298
2018/19	295
2019/20	285
2020/21	300
2021/22	311
2022/23	286
2023/24	317

Source: ONS live birth data and NHS Digital



## Housing plans

Wealden District Council (WDC) provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. WDC has published a draft new Local Plan. This projects an estimated 4,200 new dwellings being built in the area in the period 2025/26 to 2039/40. 1,000 of these dwellings are proposed for Horam, 600 for Frant, 600 for East Hoathly with Halland, 400 for Buxted, 300 for Maresfield, and 200 for Herstmonceux.

## Primary places

The number of reception (Year R) places in primary schools across the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future. However, the picture will vary between individual rural areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate

significantly from year to year, owing to the fact that the size of the cohorts of children living in small geographical areas sometimes differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise to accommodate any temporary bulges.

Linked to recent and planned new housing, in-area numbers requiring a school place in the Maynards Green Community Primary School admissions area are forecast to be high, particularly in 2026/27 and 2027/28. If the school is to keep to its PAN of 30, it is likely that the school admissions system will have to direct some in-area applicants to surrounding schools, notably in Heathfield. Further new housing is envisaged in the 2030s, and this could lead to shortfalls of places in the longer term.

Based on birth and GP registration data, Frant CE Primary School is forecast to be able to keep to its PAN of 15 over the Plan period. Much of the new housing planned for the area is on the fringes of Tunbridge Wells in Kent, and many if not most of these children, may be expected to seek places there. Further new housebuilding may increase pressure on places in the following decade.

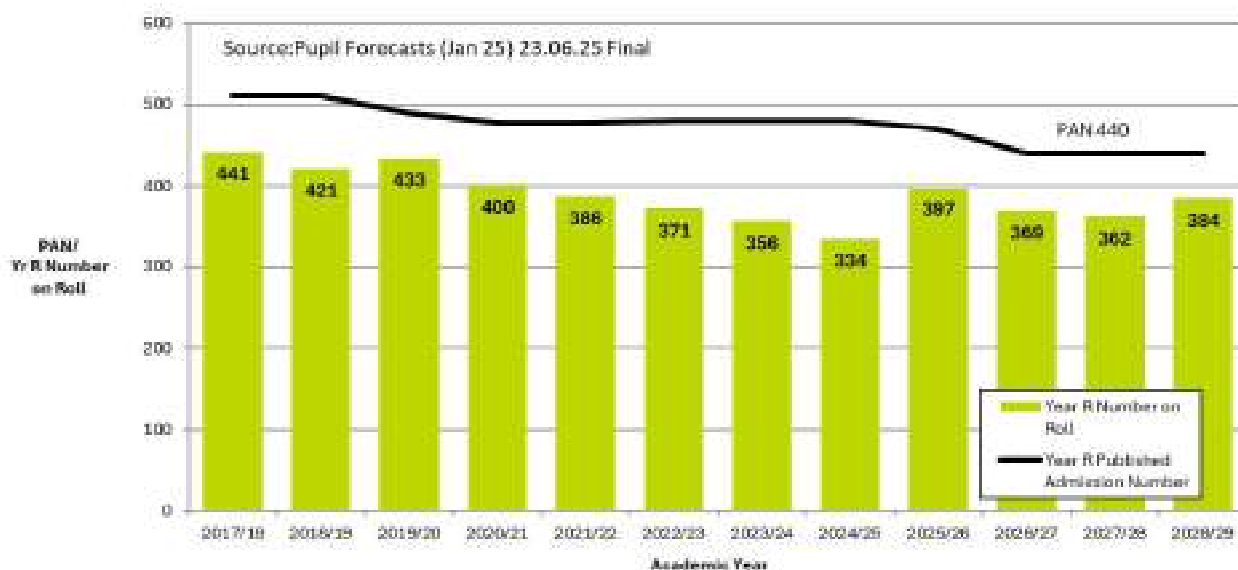
With the partial exception of 2028/29, birth and GP registration numbers in the East Hoathly CE Primary School admissions area are not particularly high. Therefore, pressures on Year R places from new house building in East Hoathly and Halland Parish may not occur until the 2030s when significant amounts of additional housing are proposed in the Draft Wealden Local Plan.

#### Rural Wealden primary Year R numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	510	441
2018/19	510	421
2019/20	490	433
2020/21	478	400
2021/22	478	386
2022/23	480	371
2023/24	480	356
2024/25	480	334
2025/26	470	397
2026/27	440	369
2027/28	440	362
2028/29	440	384

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

### Rural Wealden primary Year R numbers



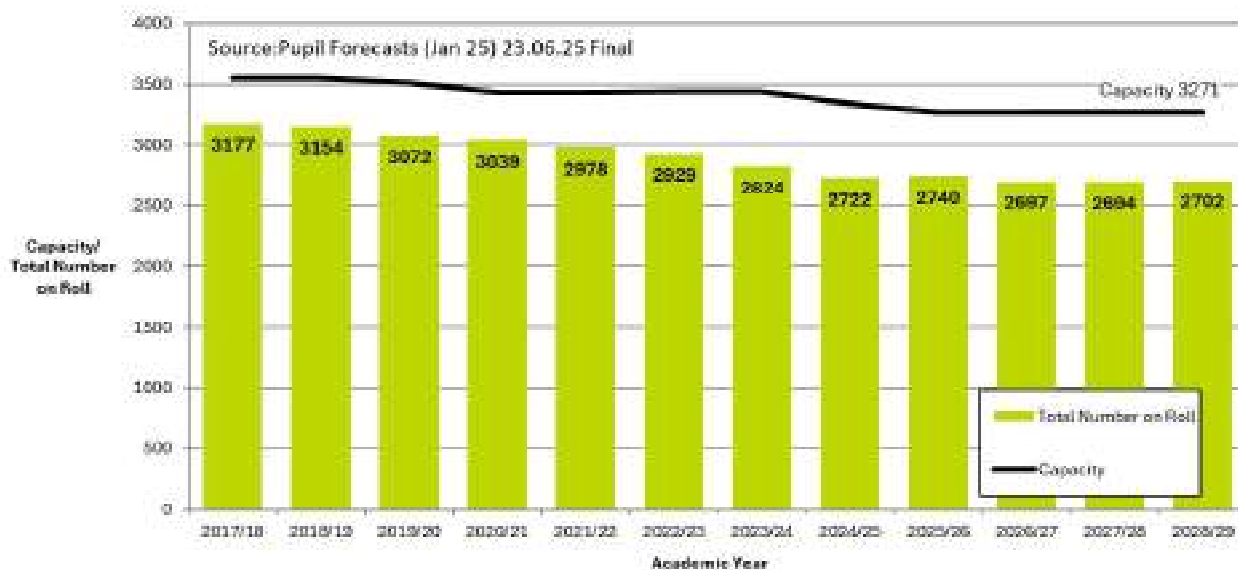
Overall pupil numbers in the area are forecast to remain fairly steady in the period to 2028/29, with surplus places of 17% by the end of the plan period. Eight schools have 25% or more surplus places.

### Rural Wealden total primary numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on Roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	3551	3177	374	11%
2018/19	3551	3154	397	11%
2019/20	3516	3072	444	13%
2020/21	3432	3039	393	11%
2021/22	3432	2978	454	13%
2022/23	3446	2929	517	15%
2023/24	3446	2824	622	18%
2024/25	3341	2722	619	19%
2025/26	3271	2740	531	16%
2026/27	3271	2697	574	18%
2027/28	3271	2694	577	18%
2028/29	3271	2702	569	17%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

## Rural Wealden total primary numbers



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

The local authority is working with all small schools with large surpluses as part of our Small Schools Strategy. We will monitor the situation at the schools and take action to address any challenges where appropriate. For example:

- As a result of the PAN reduction at Mayfield CE Primary School from 2025/26, physical accommodation was removed from the school in summer 2025 thereby reducing the school's capacity from 210 places to 140 places.
- Forest Row CE Primary School lowered its age range with effect from 1 September 2024 to establish school-run nursery provision on site. As a result, the school's capacity reduced from 315 places to 210 places.
- The PANs at Wadhurst CE Primary School and Groombridge St Thomas' CE Primary School will reduce to 30 and 15 respectively from 2026/27. Accommodation will not be removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers begin to rise again.

## Secondary places

Part of Uplands Academy's admissions area overlaps with that of Heathfield Community College. The school takes significant numbers of children from across the border in Kent. The closure of High Weald Academy has resulted in increased demand from Kent pupils for Uplands Academy since 2022/23.

Uplands Academy's numbers are also affected by admissions and appeals to Kent Grammar Schools. Normally significantly more children from Kent take up places at Uplands Academy than move in the other direction. The school also takes pupils from the Robertsbridge Community College admissions area.

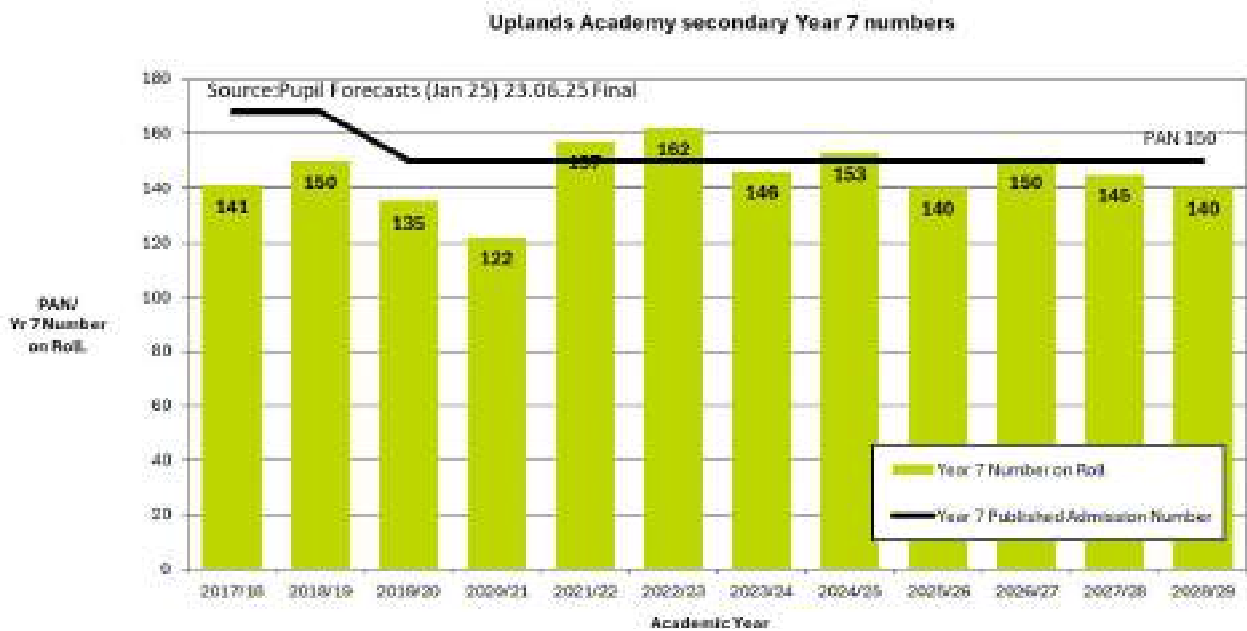
It is assumed that these higher inflows will continue to some extent, resulting in the school being forecast to be full or close to its PAN in the plan period, although the general trend in intake numbers may be gradually downwards.

As most of this out of area demand is non-priority, it is not expected that the Uplands Academy will need to go over its PAN, unless it chooses to do so voluntarily. The school has sufficient places to accommodate in-area numbers.

**Uplands Academy secondary Year 7 numbers from 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic year	PAN	Number on roll
2017/18	168	141
2018/19	168	150
2019/20	150	135
2020/21	150	122
2021/22	150	157
2022/23	150	162
2023/24	150	146
2024/25	150	153
2025/26	150	140
2026/27	150	150
2027/28	150	145
2028/29	150	140

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final



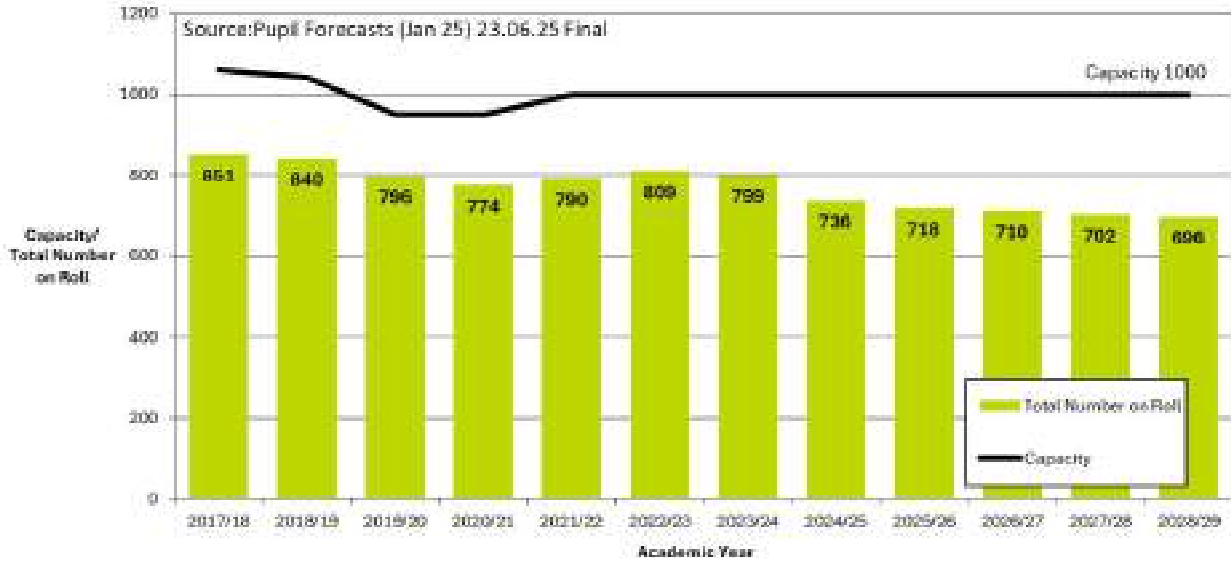
Surplus places, which stood at 26% in 2024/25, are forecast to rise to 30% by 2028/29. This is in part owing to the school’s sixth form closing at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. Accommodation has not been removed and will therefore distort surplus place figures at the school in future years.

**Uplands Academy total secondary numbers 2017/18 to 2028/29**

Academic Year	Capacity	Number on roll	Surplus / (shortfall) of places	Surplus / (shortfall) %
2017/18	1060	851	209	20%
2018/19	1040	840	200	19%
2019/20	950	796	154	16%
2020/21	950	774	176	19%
2021/22	1000	790	210	21%
2022/23	1000	809	191	19%
2023/24	1000	799	201	20%
2024/25	1000	736	264	26%
2025/26	1000	718	282	28%
2026/27	1000	710	290	29%
2027/28	1000	702	298	30%
2028/29	1000	696	304	30%

Source: Pupil Forecasts (Jan 25) 23.06.25 Final

**Uplands Academy total secondary numbers**



\*Note: For further information about individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll please refer to Appendix 1

No further secondary school organisation changes are currently planned.

# Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

## Special schools

There are 13 maintained special schools in East Sussex, all of which are academies.

Special schools	Age range	Primary need designation	LA commissioned places 2025/26
Acre Wood Academy, Crowborough	4-19	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties Severe Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder	146
Cuckmere House School, Seaford	5-16	Social Emotional and Mental Health Autistic Spectrum Disorder	97
Glyne Gap School, Bexhill	2-19	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties Severe Learning Difficulties	126
Hazel Court School, Eastbourne	11-19	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties Severe Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder	120
New Horizons, Hastings	5-16	Social Emotional and Mental Health Autistic Spectrum Disorder	98
Saxon Mount School, Hastings	11-16	Moderate Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder	165
St Mary's School, Horam	7-16	Social Emotional and Mental Health Autistic Spectrum Disorder	94
Summerdown School, Eastbourne	3-16	Autistic Spectrum Disorder Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	155
The Flagship School, Hastings	6-16	Social Emotional and Mental Health Autistic Spectrum Disorder	80
The Lindfield School, Eastbourne	11-16	Autistic Spectrum Disorder Moderate Learning Difficulties Speech, Language and Communication Needs	115
The Ropemakers Academy, Hailsham	4-16	Social Emotional and Mental Health	100
The South Downs School, Eastbourne	4-11	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties Severe Learning Difficulties	160
Torfield School, Hastings	4-11	Autistic Spectrum Disorder Moderate Learning Difficulties	100

\* Correct on 1 October 2025

## Mainstream schools with specialist facilities

There are specialist facilities in 19 mainstream schools in East Sussex (9 primary and 10 secondary), catering for primary needs such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Physical Disabilities (PD).

School name	Designation	LA commissioned places 2025/26
<b>Primary schools</b>		
All Saints Church of England Primary School, Bexhill	Autistic Spectrum Disorder with associated Social Emotional and Mental Health and Speech, Language and Communication Needs	15
ARK Little Ridge Primary Academy, Hastings	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	15
Churchwood Primary Academy, Hastings	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8
Denton Community Primary School, Newhaven	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8
Grovelands Community Primary School, Hailsham	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	16
Manor Primary School, Uckfield	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8
Meridian Community Primary School, Peacehaven	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8
Wallands Community Primary and Nursery School, Lewes	Speech, Language and Communication Needs Autistic Spectrum Disorder	14
West St Leonards Primary Academy	Physical Disability Moderate Learning Difficulties	11
<b>Secondary schools</b>		
Bexhill High Academy	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	8
Hailsham Academy	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12
Heathfield Community College	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12
Peacehaven Community School	Speech, Language and Communication Needs Autistic Spectrum Disorder	22
Priory School, Lewes	Specific Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12
Robertsbridge Community College	Specific Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12
The Eastbourne Academy	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	6
The Hastings Academy	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	6
The St Leonards Academy	Physical Disability Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12
Uckfield College	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	6

You can find more information about each special school and specialist facility on the local authority's [Local Offer page](#).

## Education, Health, and Care Plans

The local authority has a statutory duty to identify, assess and provide for children and young people with special educational needs. An assessment may lead to the issuing of an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) for a child. An EHCP sets out the additional support a child or young person needs and the type of school (mainstream or special) or other provision they will attend in order to meet their needs.

### Demand for SEND provision

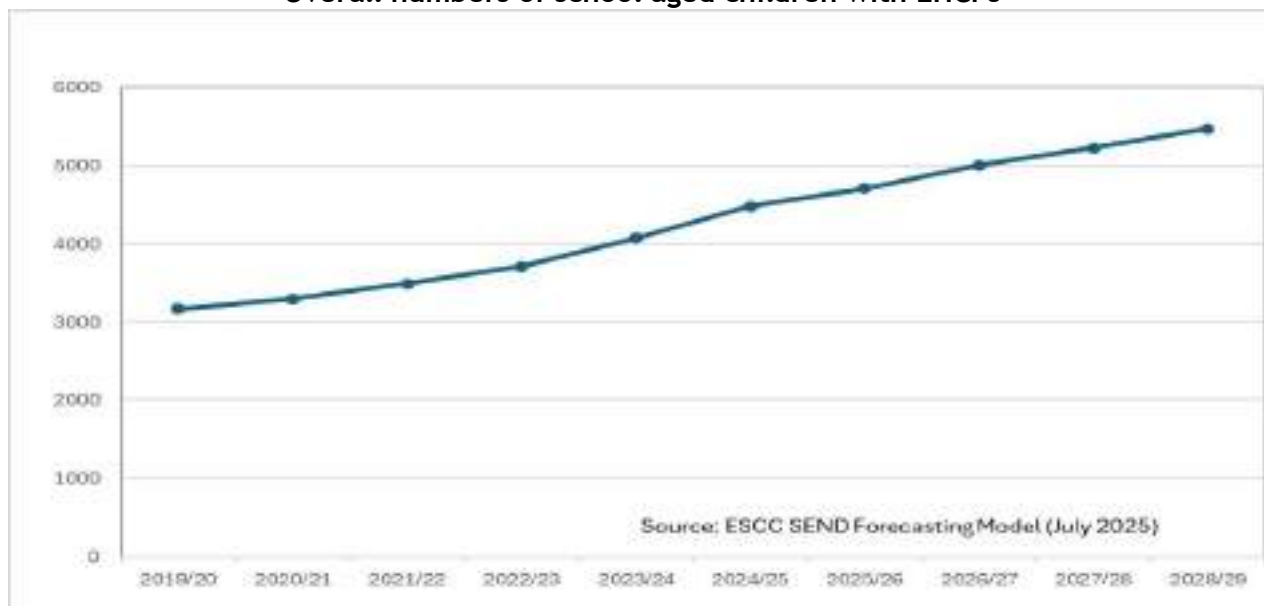
As with other local authorities nationally, the overall numbers of children and young people aged 4 to 25 with an EHCP has been growing significantly. In 2024/25, the number of school aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an EHCP stood at 4,481. There were also 412 young people aged 19-25 who need continued support to transition to adulthood. Over the next four years, the local authority forecasts that overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs will grow, by around 22%, to nearly 5,500.

#### Overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs

Academic year	EHCPs
2019/20	3170
2020/21	3297
2021/22	3494
2022/23	3713
2023/24	4073
2024/25	4481
2025/26	4708
2026/27	5008
2027/28	5224
2028/29	5468

Source: ESCC SEND Forecasting Model (July 2025)

#### Overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs



There has been a significant increase in parental demand for statutory plans and, alongside this, an increase in the requests for special school placements. Challenges with parental confidence in mainstream provision being able to meet the needs of children has had an impact on the number of requests for Education, Health and Care needs assessments and provision in the specialist sector.

The number of children and young people identified as autistic is growing year on year and is translating into rapidly increasing numbers of EHCPs issued with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. There are no signs of this trend reducing.

The local authority has seen a post Covid upturn in the number of plans being issued with a primary need classification of Speech Language and Communication Need. There has also been a growth in the number of children presenting with mental health needs that are impacting on school attendance, which has resulted in increases in demand in the area of Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. In the past year there has also been a jump in the number of children with a primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties.

The number of plans issued for other primary need groups are mainly stable or falling. The following table shows the number of school age children with an EHCP by primary need type.

Key to primary need designations:

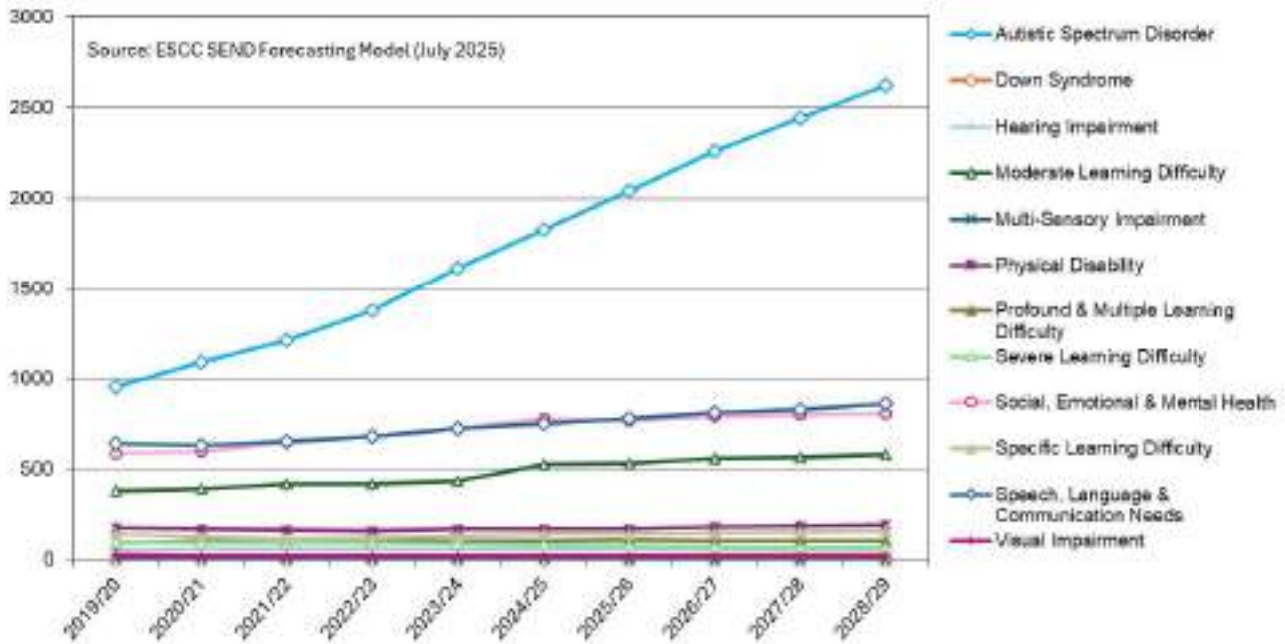
- ASD Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- DS Down Syndrome
- HI Hearing Impairment
- MLD Moderate Learning Difficulties
- MSI Multi-sensory Impairment
- PD Physical Disability
- PMLD Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
- SLD Severe Learning Difficulties
- SEMH Social Emotional and Mental Health
- SpLD Specific Learning Difficulties
- SLCN Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- VI Visual Impairment

**EHCPs by primary need group (school aged children) from 2019/20 to 2028/29**

Need	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
ASD	955	1091	1211	1375	1611	1830	2044	2262	2440	2624
DS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
HI	57	63	63	61	63	60	58	56	51	51
MLD	380	388	417	419	433	525	534	558	566	584
MSI	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
PD	178	170	165	157	168	172	170	179	186	190
PMLD	96	105	102	104	105	107	108	107	105	102
SLD	101	91	93	92	87	81	75	72	66	66
SEMH	587	600	648	682	725	781	770	789	804	807
SpLD	144	128	115	119	134	144	142	146	153	157
SLCN	642	633	653	680	723	754	780	815	830	864
VI	26	24	22	21	21	24	24	21	20	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>3170</b>	<b>3297</b>	<b>3494</b>	<b>3713</b>	<b>4073</b>	<b>4481</b>	<b>4708</b>	<b>5008</b>	<b>5224</b>	<b>5468</b>

Source: ESCC SEND Forecasting Model (July 2025)

**EHCPs by primary need group (school aged children) from 2019/20 to 2028/29**



In 2024/25, there were 2,071 East Sussex resident children and young people on roll in special schools. 1,907 were in schools in East Sussex and 164 were in schools in other authorities. 1,568 were in maintained provision (including academies) and 503 were in non-maintained and independent special schools. A further 225 East Sussex resident children and young people were in specialist facilities in mainstream schools.

The table and chart below show that, since 2020/21, the biggest need has been for places in maintained special schools and special academies followed by funded places in mainstream schools.

**Key to table:**

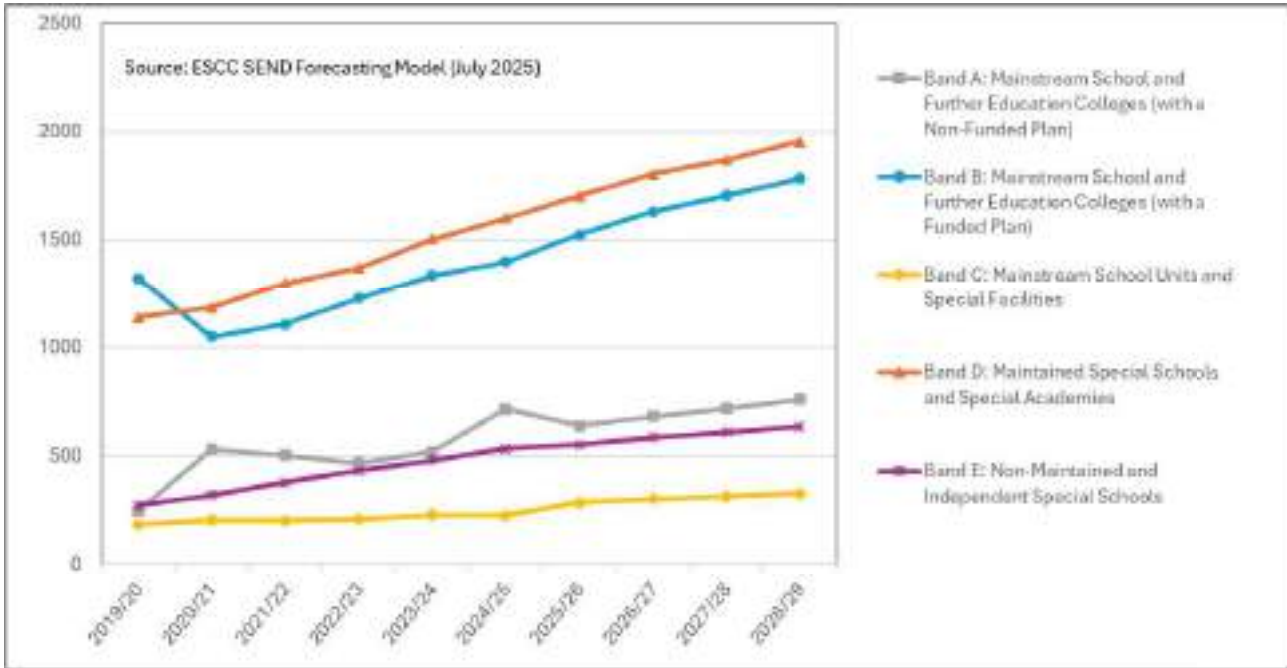
- Band A: Mainstream school and further education colleges (with a non-funded plan)
- Band B: Mainstream school and further education colleges (with a funded plan)
- Band C: Mainstream school units and specialist facilities
- Band D: Maintained special schools and special academies
- Band E: Non-maintained and independent special schools

**EHCPs by type of provision needed**

	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28	2028/ 29
<b>Band A</b>	248	532	505	468	521	717	640	683	721	762
<b>Band B</b>	1323	1051	1108	1230	1335	1400	1525	1631	1706	1785
<b>Band C</b>	187	206	204	211	230	228	286	302	315	328
<b>Band D</b>	1139	1186	1298	1371	1505	1601	1704	1804	1871	1956
<b>Band E</b>	273	322	379	433	482	535	553	587	610	636
<b>Total</b>	<b>3170</b>	<b>3297</b>	<b>3494</b>	<b>3713</b>	<b>4073</b>	<b>4481</b>	<b>4708</b>	<b>5008</b>	<b>5224</b>	<b>5468</b>

Source: ESCC SEND Forecasting Model (July 2025)

## EHCPs by type of provision needed



The number of children and young people deemed to require a special school place has risen by over 600 (42%) in the past four years. The number of pupils placed in maintained special school places has risen by approximately 400 (35%); the number of places in independent and non-maintained special school places has risen by approximately 200, a 66% increase.

The following table compares the combined capacity of places in special schools and specialist facilities in mainstream schools with the current and forecast need for such places. The local authority does not have data on available places in independent special schools. In reality, most of the current shortfall in places shown in the table is being met by independent special school placements.

### Need for and capacity of special school places from 2024/25 to 2028/29

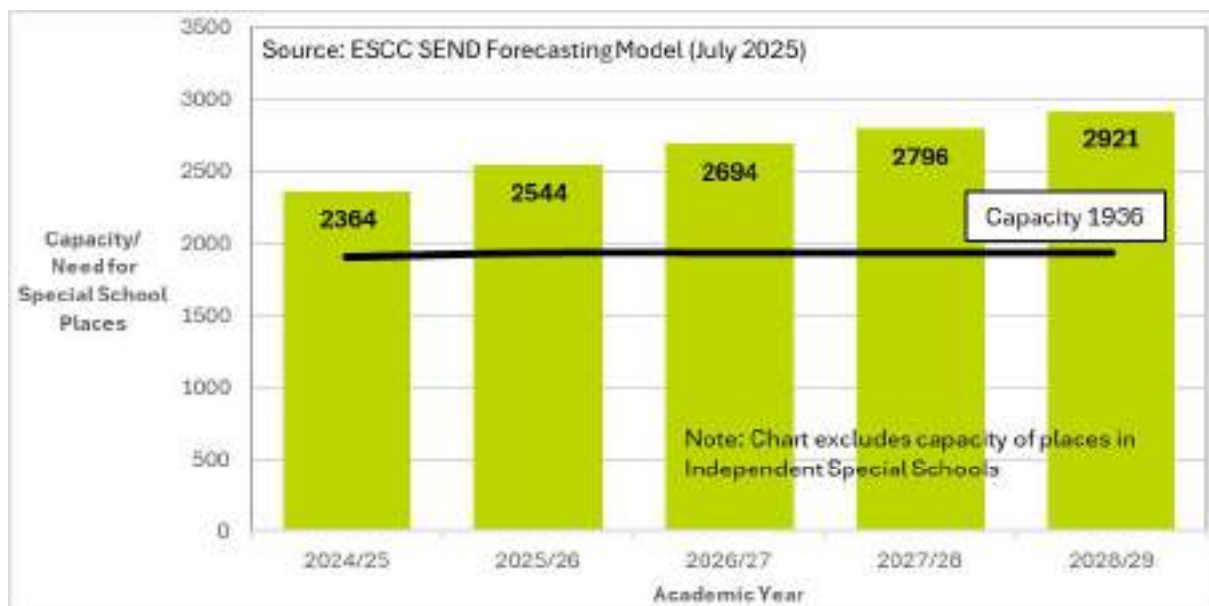
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
<b>Capacity of places*</b>	1906	1936	1936	1936	1936
<b>Need for places** (No. of EHCPs)</b>	2364	2544	2694	2796	2921

Source: ESCC SEND Forecasting Model (July 2025)

\*Capacity totals include maintained and non-maintained special schools and specialist facilities in mainstream schools, but excludes places in independent special schools

\*\* This includes the need for specialist facilities in mainstream schools

## Need for and capacity of special school places from 2024/25 to 2028/29



The local authority has to use high cost independent and non-maintained special school provision to meet the demand for specialist placements. This is because there is insufficient capacity in state run provision. If current placement trends continue over the period to 2028/29, the effective shortfall in state run specialist provision is forecast to increase by over 500 places.

Figures for 2024/25 show that 2.3% of all pupils in state-funded schools in East Sussex are in special schools. This compares to the national average for England of 2.0%. ([Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics, Department for Education, 2025](#)).

### SEND place planning strategy

There is a broad offer of specialist provision across the county within the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors with a comparatively high number of special school placements available when compared to the national average. The majority of places for our special schools are allocated at phase transfer (e.g. from primary Year 6 to secondary Year 7). The capacity for placements mid-year is a particular gap in provision as places are full at the start of the academic year.

In recent years the local authority has delivered new special school and mainstream specialist facility places, to help address the increasing demand for provision and to manage the high cost of placements in non-maintained and independent schools. This has included:

- 287 new special school places at: The Ropemakers Academy in Hailsham, The Flagship School in Hastings, and Summerdown School in Eastbourne.
- 72 new specialist facility places at seven mainstream schools (five primary and two secondary). The primary schools are: All Saints CE Primary School in Bexhill, Churchwood Primary Academy in Hastings, Denton Community Primary School in Newhaven, Grovelands Community Primary School in Hailsham and Meridian Community Primary School in Peacehaven. The secondary schools are Priory School in Lewes and Robertsbridge Community College.
- 2 mainstream schools have extended the designation of their existing specialist facilities to include Autistic Spectrum Disorder to reflect the growing demand for

provision for children with autism. The schools are: Wallands Community Primary School in Lewes and Peacehaven Community School.

- Acre Wood Academy in Crowborough (formerly Grove Park School) extended its designation from 1 September 2025 to include Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Severe Learning Difficulties in addition to its previous designation of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

Going forward, the local authority's SEND place planning strategy is focused on developing more specialist facilities in mainstream schools, supporting schools to be more inclusive and for children to be educated alongside their peers in their local communities. In the 2024/25 academic year we invited expressions of interest for new or expanded specialist facilities and have approved three new primary phase facilities, one new secondary phase facility and two expanded secondary school facilities:

- Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School: New specialist facility for 12 pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening January 2026.
- Ocklynge Junior School in Eastbourne: New specialist facility for 12 pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening January 2026.
- Uckfield College: Expansion of existing specialist facility from 6 to 12 places for pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening September 2025.
- Heathfield Community College: Expansion of existing specialist facility from 12 to 20 places for pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening date to be confirmed.
- Chyngton School: New specialist facility for 12 pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening date to be confirmed.
- Seaford Head School: New specialist facility for 12 pupils with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Opening date to be confirmed.

We continue to work with schools to support new facilities in areas of need and to ensure progression routes between primary and secondary facilities. We continue to work with our special schools to ensure that their designation meets local needs, for example three schools with a designation of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) have recently changed their designation to also include Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We are working with one of our special school trusts to pilot a satellite class at a local primary school. This would support inclusion whilst creating more capacity in our special schools.

The local authority is reorganising and expanding Acre Wood Academy's Church Road premises to increase capacity for secondary age students and create a school run nursery. Construction is due to commence in autumn 2025 with completion expected during the 2026/27 academic year. Secondary age students currently co-located at Beacon Academy in Crowborough will transition to their new accommodation for the start of the 2027/28 academic year. The new accommodation will benefit the school and pupils by bringing together primary and secondary provision on one site, supporting transition and making best use of the Church Road site. The new nursery will mean that children who need this provision can start at the school from 2 years old, ensuring a good start to their education.

We have also identified a need for more specialist provision for post-16 learners and are exploring with current special schools and post 16 providers how this can be best delivered.



# Alternative Provision

The local authority has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all children, including those in need of alternative provision (AP) and to ensure that the alternative provision is suitable and good quality, as set out in the DfE guidance [Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools](#). AP is included as part of our SEND place planning strategy.

The local authority works with partners to ensure that there is sufficient and suitable AP and post-16 options for children and young people with SEND. This includes a focus on the range and quality of AP available in East Sussex and ensuring there are clear progression routes to post-16 education and training.

There is a range of AP available in East Sussex:

- The local authority fulfils its obligation to provide full-time education for all permanently excluded children by day 6 of a child's absence through the East Sussex Academy.
- The local authority commissions East Sussex Academy to provide tier 1 and tier 2<sup>1</sup> provision to schools.
- The AP Directory offers a range of AP for schools to commission from.
- Internal on-site AP delivered by schools.

In the 2024/25 academic year, the local authority commissioned 80 secondary places and 32 primary places for dual registered and day 6 provision. Take up was 100%.

In 2025/26 the local authority commissioned 220 places at the East Sussex Academy. This is a 96% increase on the number of places we commissioned in 2024/25. This is the first full year that the East Sussex Academy has been commissioned to deliver our day 6 provision. The provision will operate from three sites:

- East Sussex Academy, Hastings
- East Sussex Academy, Hailsham
- East Sussex Academy, Newhaven

Throughout the year we will continue to review how the AP commissioning is meeting need and if there are sufficient places available across the county.

The AP Directory has 26 providers on it. In 2024/25 schools commissioned 96 places<sup>2</sup> from the Directory. Feedback from schools show that there are some gaps in provision for Key Stage 1 providers and provision in some of our rural areas. We continue to work with schools and providers to encourage new providers to apply for the Directory where required.

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<sup>1</sup> **Tier 1:** Targeted support within school to support pupils at risk of exclusion to stay in mainstream education.

**Tier 2:** Time-limited placements in alternative provision with the expectation to return to their mainstream schools.

<sup>2</sup> Based on AP Directory School Survey results from 20 secondary schools and 31 primary schools.

## Post-16 Provision

Local authorities have statutory duties to encourage, enable, and assist young people to participate in education or training. Specifically, these duties are:

- To secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) is maintained. This is a duty under the Education Act 1996. To fulfil this duty, local authorities need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.
- To make available to all young people aged 13-19 and those up to 25 with an EHCP, support that will encourage, enable, or assist them to participate in education or training under Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008.
- Tracking young people's participation in Years 12 and 13 (ages 16 and 17) is a key element of these duties, as is promoting effective participation.

In fulfilling these duties, the Council provides support to schools and post-16 education training providers to ensure our young people can make a successful post-16 transition to a destination of their choice.

We work with providers to ensure that the post-16 provision offer meets the requirements of increasing participation, by offering a wide range of options with clear progression routes into further or higher education or employment with training. The post-16 offer should also reflect the local skills needs and priority sectors of East Sussex, with a curriculum plan and progression pathways which are influenced by local employers.

The local authority supports the progression of young people through:

- a focus on securing good quality careers advice through local [East Sussex Careers Hub](#) activities
- embedding the Enterprise Advisors Network
- the provision of [Careers East Sussex](#)
- an e-prospectus and online application platform
- a Work Experience Service for schools
- commissioning the Youth Employability Service to provide information, advice and guidance to vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment, or training or at risk of not being so

### Current Post-16 provision in East Sussex

There are a number of different options for post-16 study in East Sussex including:

- Schools with sixth forms
- Special schools with post-16 provision
- General Further Education Colleges (GFE)
- Sixth form colleges
- Independent learning providers
- Private training providers including apprenticeship providers
- Specialist provision for young people with an EHCP

The tables below list the schools and colleges offering post-16 provision in East Sussex. There are five schools with sixth forms, three special schools with sixth forms and four post-16 colleges:

Schools with Sixth Forms	
School Name	Location
Beacon Academy	Crowborough
Hailsham Academy*	Hailsham
Heathfield Community College	Heathfield
Seaford Head School	Seaford
Uckfield College	Uckfield

\*Sixth Form provision is due to close from September 2026

Special Schools with Sixth Forms	
School Name	Location
Glyne Gap School	Bexhill
Acre Wood Academy	Crowborough
Hazel Court School	Eastbourne

Post-16 Colleges	Location	Type
College Name		
Bexhill College	Bexhill	Sixth Form College
DV8 Bexhill	Bexhill	Creative College
East Sussex College	Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes	GFE College
Plumpton College	Plumpton	Land based College

For more information about post-16 provision in East Sussex, visit our local offer at [College, Courses and Education | East Sussex Local Offer](#).

## Demand for Provision

Demand for provision is more complex for the post-16 age group due to the increased breadth of learner choice compared to those of statutory school age. Availability of opportunities such as apprenticeships and supported internships are dictated by the labour market and as such can fluctuate creating unexpected pressures in other areas of provision.

Recent growth in demand for EHCPs is also increasing the pressure on providers offering specialist programmes designed for students with special educational needs and disabilities.

The following table provides a breakdown of the numbers of young people in education employment or training and those not in education, employment or training as at June 2025.

Cohort group	Cohort size	In education, employment or training	Not in education, employment or training
Year 12s (16 years)	6057	5818 (96%)	239 (4%)

Year 13s (17 years)	5915	5564 (94%)	351 (6%)
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The local authority will work with education and training providers alongside local employers to ensure that all young people are encouraged and supported to participate in education and training leading towards sustained employment.

## Post-16 Destinations

The post-16 destinations of our students are tracked in line with our statutory reporting duties. According to the 2024 Annual Activity data (1 November 2024), 90% of our Year 11 students progressed to further study in post-16 settings. The following table outlines the distribution of students across various course type.

Post-16 Destination	Percentage of Year 11 Students
<b>Total progressing to further study</b>	<b>90%</b>
A Levels	36%
Level 2 courses	25%
Level 3 courses	19%
Level 1 courses	11%
T Levels	5%
Entry Level	3%
Special Needs and other courses	1%

The number of places available at level 2 continues to be a provision gap. The number of training providers in East Sussex has decreased considerably over the past few years due to the ceasing of European Social Fund support and short term, Covid related funding. Work with the Department for Education and post-16 providers has been ongoing for several years to ensure that provision is developed in response to demand to ensure that young people have an offer for post-16 learning that meets their needs and aspirations.

## Post-19 SEND

In the 2024/25 academic year there were 482 young people with EHCPs aged 19-25 in post-16 education. Most of these young people were enrolled on courses at level 2 and below, with a quarter enrolled at level 3. There is an identified need for the local authority to work with providers to develop post-16 SEND provision to meet demand for places. This includes ensuring progression routes for young people with SEND into college and progression routes for young people aged 16-25 with profound multiple learning difficulties that promote preparation for adulthood.

# Appendix 1: Individual school capacities and forecast numbers on roll

## Primary school capacities and forecast numbers on roll (NOR)

Eastbourne primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Bourne Primary School	420	406	391	377	367
Gildredge House (primary phase)	392	421	420	420	420
Heron Park Primary Academy	420	283	267	247	231
Langney Primary Academy	420	422	414	407	408
Motcombe Infants' School	360	227	213	205	180
Oakwood Primary Academy	420	257	244	251	257
Ocklynge Junior School	840	713	670	634	647
Parkland Infant School	180	180	177	176	179
Parkland Junior School	240	240	241	240	240
Pashley Down Infant School	270	241	248	270	270
Roselands Infants' School	270	250	237	222	223
Shinewater Primary School	420	361	333	298	273
St Andrew's CE Infants School	270	230	218	194	194
St John's Meads CE Primary School	218	173	161	157	153
St Thomas à Becket Catholic Primary School	420	445	444	444	444
Stafford Junior School	360	374	372	372	356
The Cavendish School (primary phase)	420	422	421	421	420
The Haven CE Methodist Primary School	420	407	391	372	356
Tollgate Community Junior School	360	356	350	356	335
West Rise Primary School	630	624	614	606	602
<b>Total</b>	<b>7750</b>	<b>7031</b>	<b>6827</b>	<b>6669</b>	<b>6555</b>

Hastings primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
All Saints CE Junior Academy	240	227	232	227	233
ARK Blacklands Primary Academy	630	629	630	630	628
Ark Castledown Primary Academy	420	354	349	326	306
ARK Little Ridge Primary Academy	420	433	432	430	427
Christ Church CE Primary and Nursery Academy	420	385	371	350	328
Churchwood Primary Academy	210	196	193	186	182
Dudley Infant Academy	180	173	174	178	173
Hollington Primary School	420	245	232	216	191
Ore Village Primary Academy	420	243	226	204	179
Robsack Wood Primary Academy	420	341	335	320	301
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	210	202	198	190	183
Sandown Primary School and Nursery	420	419	419	420	418
Silverdale Primary Academy	630	622	622	620	617
St Leonard's CE Primary Academy	420	418	422	422	418
St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School	210	201	199	191	183
St Paul's Church of England Academy	630	605	598	583	565
The Baird Primary Academy	420	278	268	261	252
West St Leonards Primary Academy	420	420	422	411	406
<b>Total</b>	<b>7140</b>	<b>6390</b>	<b>6319</b>	<b>6165</b>	<b>5991</b>

Lewes and surrounding area primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Iford & Kingston CE Primary School	210	170	164	156	156
South Malling CE Primary School	210	205	205	204	205
Southover CE Primary School	420	286	261	240	230
Wallands Community Primary School	420	266	256	249	234
Western Road Community Primary School	210	211	211	211	211
<b>Total</b>	<b>1470</b>	<b>1139</b>	<b>1096</b>	<b>1061</b>	<b>1036</b>

The Havens - Newhaven primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Breakwater Academy	210	148	135	139	143
Denton Community Primary and Nursery School	210	207	211	210	208
Harbour Primary and Nursery School	420	412	414	417	420
High Cliff Academy	210	154	155	166	172
<b>Total</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>943</b>

The Havens - Peacehaven primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Meridian Community Primary School and Nursery	420	421	424	425	424
Peacehaven Heights Academy	420	333	332	315	316
Telscombe Cliffs Academy	630	492	484	447	407
<b>Total</b>	<b>1470</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>1240</b>	<b>1187</b>	<b>1148</b>

Seaford primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Annecy Catholic Primary School	210	184	176	165	158
Chyngton School	420	340	308	276	252
Cradle Hill Community Primary School	630	619	610	594	587
Seaford Primary School	420	397	379	355	340
<b>Total</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>1540</b>	<b>1472</b>	<b>1389</b>	<b>1337</b>

Rural Lewes primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Barcombe CE Primary School	140	127	124	126	128
Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School	140	106	96	85	88
Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School	168	200	201	204	201
Firle CE Primary School	105	56	56	55	53
Hamsey Community Primary School	105	98	91	90	90
Newick CE Primary School	210	212	213	205	206
Plumpton Primary School	140	138	137	136	141
Ringmer Primary and Nursery School	315	289	296	297	301
Wivelsfield Primary School	240	223	227	231	233
<b>Total</b>	<b>1563</b>	<b>1450</b>	<b>1441</b>	<b>1428</b>	<b>1441</b>

<b>Bexhill and surrounding area primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
All Saints CE Primary School	210	221	220	218	217
Catsfield CE Primary School	105	104	104	105	106
Chantry Community Primary School	210	197	201	206	209
Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	525	323	348	308	319
King Offa Primary Academy	420	375	376	372	378
Little Common School	630	626	632	632	634
Ninfield CE Primary School	157	138	133	131	130
Pebsham Primary Academy	210	198	200	202	206
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	210	209	210	211	213
St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School	420	420	421	421	423
<b>Total</b>	<b>3097</b>	<b>2810</b>	<b>2844</b>	<b>2804</b>	<b>2834</b>

<b>Battle Primary School</b>	<b>Capacity 2023/24</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Battle and Langton CE Primary School	420	422	435	446	448

<b>Rye and surrounding area primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Peasmarsh CE Primary School	105	71	69	70	72
Rye Community Primary School	420	191	184	162	167
St Michael's CE Primary School	105	79	71	72	64
St Thomas' CE Aided Primary School	140	142	142	143	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>446</b>

<b>Rural Rother primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Beckley CE Primary School	105	90	90	88	81
Bodiam CE Primary School	105	75	71	75	73
Brede Primary School	140	95	89	87	90
Burwash CE School	175	158	151	153	149
Crowhurst CE Primary School	105	92	88	83	77
Dallington CE Primary School	105	113	107	106	106
Etchingham CE Primary School	105	100	99	95	97
Guestling-Bradshaw CE Primary School	210	190	191	187	192

Rural Rother primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Hurst Green CE Primary School and Nursery	140	112	114	116	116
Icklesham CE Primary School	105	99	100	100	102
Netherfield CE Primary School	140	123	126	120	119
Northiam CE Primary School and Nursery	140	114	120	117	122
Salehurst CE Primary School	210	152	138	138	133
Sedlescombe CE Primary School	210	206	204	195	189
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	105	82	81	74	73
Stonegate CE Primary School	105	97	98	99	101
Ticehurst and Flimwell CE Primary School	210	107	102	101	95
Westfield School	210	181	173	170	161
<b>Total</b>	<b>2625</b>	<b>2184</b>	<b>2142</b>	<b>2102</b>	<b>2075</b>

Crowborough and surrounding area primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Ashdown Primary School	420	403	401	399	397
Jarvis Brook Primary School	210	95	100	84	89
Rotherfield Primary School	210	205	205	207	206
Sir Henry Fermor CE Primary School	420	396	391	375	369
St John's CE Primary School	210	207	209	206	210
St Marys Catholic Primary School	210	216	213	210	209
<b>Total</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>1523</b>	<b>1520</b>	<b>1480</b>	<b>1480</b>

Hailsham and surrounding area primary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Grovelands Community Primary School	630	640	639	639	637
Hailsham Academy (primary phase)	420	417	422	424	424
Hawkes Farm Academy	420	336	348	364	413
Hellingly Community Primary School	210	201	206	212	212
Park Mead Primary School	105	85	89	93	92
Thornton Grove Academy	270	217	212	214	220
White House Academy	210	195	201	209	209
<b>Total</b>	<b>2415</b>	<b>2091</b>	<b>2118</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>2207</b>

<b>Heathfield primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
All Saints' and St Richard's CE Primary School	140	88	91	83	80
Cross-in-Hand CE Primary School	420	386	379	367	359
Parkside Community Primary School	210	208	208	209	209
<b>Total</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>648</b>

<b>Polegate and Willingdon primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity 2023/24</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Polegate Primary School	630	627	615	611	614
Willingdon Primary School	420	417	419	420	421
<b>Total</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>614</b>

<b>Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Hankham Primary School	140	111	114	124	130
Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School	420	412	401	391	387
Stone Cross School	420	423	420	421	423
<b>Total</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>941</b>

<b>Uckfield and surrounding area primary schools</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Framfield CE Primary School	105	88	87	82	80
Harlands Primary School	210	214	214	212	211
Little Horsted CE School	105	93	92	88	87
Manor Primary School	420	415	411	402	402
Rocks Park Primary School	210	213	212	212	210
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	210	199	189	181	175
<b>Total</b>	<b>1260</b>	<b>1221</b>	<b>1205</b>	<b>1177</b>	<b>1166</b>

<b>Rural Wealden</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Alfriston School	105	82	80	79	77
Blackboys CE Primary School	140	135	139	141	143
Bonnors CE School, Maresfield	105	100	96	95	90
Buxted CE Primary School	210	194	193	193	205

<b>Rural Wealden</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Chiddingly Primary School	105	106	105	106	105
Danehill CE Primary School	105	90	86	81	81
East Hoathly CE Primary School	105	76	78	84	94
Five Ashes CE Primary School	56	53	52	50	53
Fletching CE Primary School	105	80	80	82	90
Forest Row CE Primary School	210	170	171	175	174
Frant CE Primary School	105	102	102	108	112
Groombridge St Thomas' CE Primary School	210	133	121	121	112
Herstmonceux CE Primary School	205	207	213	214	215
High Hurstwood CE Primary School	105	96	96	96	98
Laughton Community Primary School	105	80	83	88	92
Mark Cross CE Primary School	105	90	89	86	86
Mayfield CE Primary School	140	147	141	141	136
Maynards Green Community Primary School	210	206	209	210	211
Nutley CE Primary School	105	64	60	59	58
Punnetts Town Community Primary School	105	100	98	92	86
St Mark's CE Primary School, Hadlow Down	105	54	49	43	44
St Mary the Virgin CE Primary School, Hartfield	105	80	75	72	69
St Michael's Primary School	105	71	61	53	44
Wadhurst CE Primary School	315	226	221	225	227
<b>Total</b>	<b>3271</b>	<b>2740</b>	<b>2697</b>	<b>2694</b>	<b>2702</b>

## Secondary school capacities and forecast numbers on roll (NOR)

Eastbourne secondary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Gildredge House (secondary phase)	840	748	744	738	732
Ratton School	1215	1201	1201	1211	1210
St Catherine's College	1040	1071	1064	1063	1055
The Cavendish School (secondary phase)	1000	900	907	906	906
The Eastbourne Academy	900	775	763	732	704
The Turing School	945	800	828	828	799
<b>Total</b>	<b>5940</b>	<b>5495</b>	<b>5507</b>	<b>5478</b>	<b>5406</b>

Hastings secondary schools	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
ARK Alexandra Academy	2100	1376	1334	1296	1231
The Hastings Academy	900	821	833	837	836
The St Leonards Academy	1500	1332	1347	1369	1380
<b>Total</b>	<b>4500</b>	<b>3529</b>	<b>3514</b>	<b>3502</b>	<b>3447</b>

Lewes and surrounding area	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Priory School	1160	1176	1176	1175	1168

The Havens	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Peacehaven Community School	900	897	889	877	870
Seahaven Academy	900	719	678	660	614
<b>Total</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>1616</b>	<b>1567</b>	<b>1537</b>	<b>1484</b>

Seaford	Capacity	NOR 2025/26	NOR 2026/27	NOR 2027/28	NOR 2028/29
Seaford Head School	1575	1457	1432	1423	1401

<b>Rural Lewes</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Chailey School	900	868	885	898	902
King's Academy Ringmer	1080	681	709	715	697

<b>Bexhill and surrounding area</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Bexhill High Academy	1650	1425	1417	1433	1433
St Richard's Catholic College	1000	1028	1022	1012	1008
<b>Total</b>	<b>2650</b>	<b>2453</b>	<b>2439</b>	<b>2445</b>	<b>2441</b>

<b>Battle</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Claverham Community College	1150	1152	1154	1155	1153

<b>Rye and surrounding area</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Rye College	750	663	687	704	686

<b>Rural Rother</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Robertsbridge Community College	800	676	638	605	587

<b>Crowborough and surrounding area</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Beacon Academy	2050	1641	1616	1596	1558

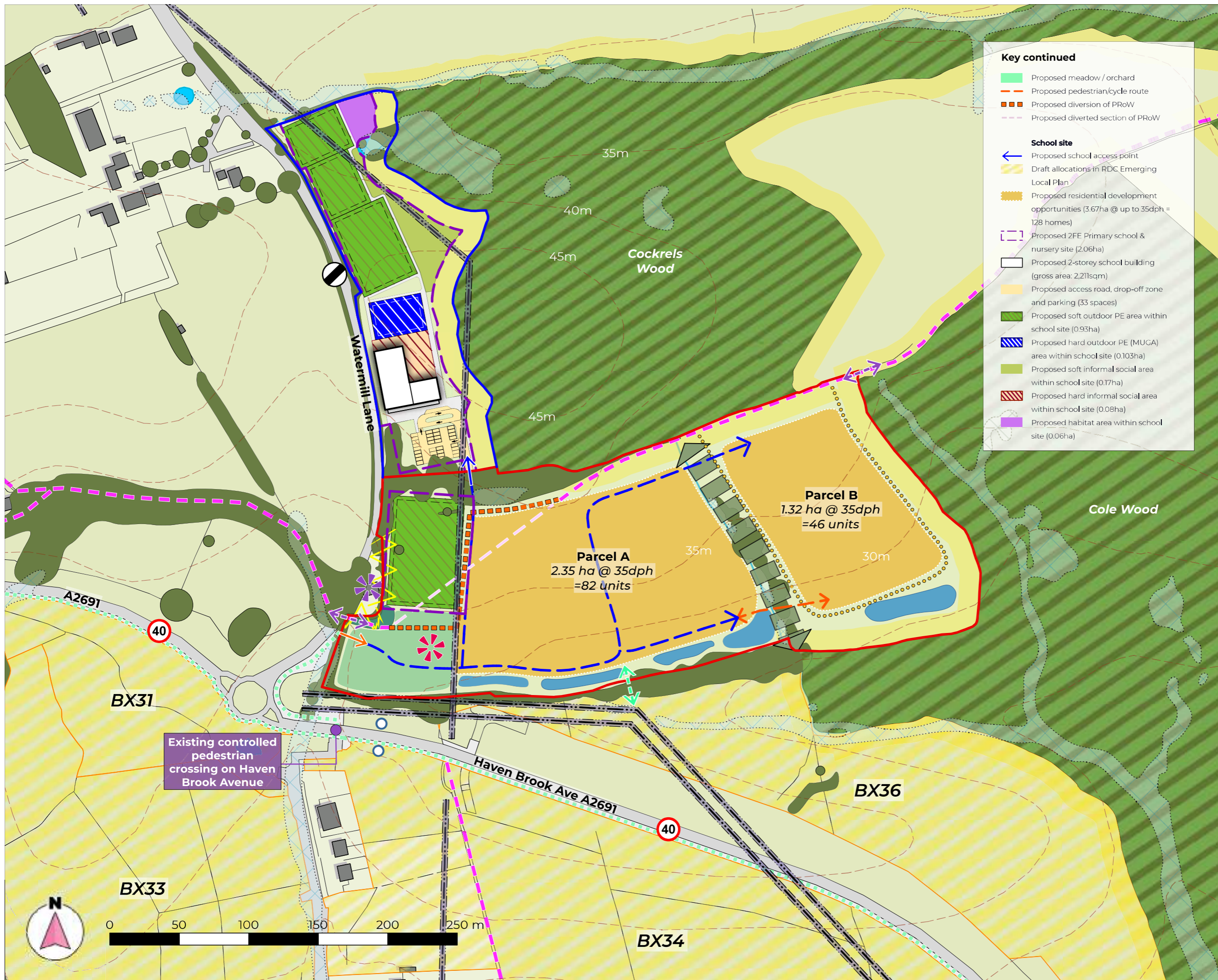
<b>Hailsham and surrounding area</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Hailsham Academy (secondary phase)	1800	1103	1087	1086	1082

<b>Heathfield</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Heathfield Community College	1560	1411	1418	1414	1412

<b>Polegate and Willingdon</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Willingdon Community School	1110	1117	1124	1128	1098

<b>Uckfield and surrounding area</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Uckfield College	1750	1630	1654	1680	1689

<b>Rural Wealden</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>NOR 2025/26</b>	<b>NOR 2026/27</b>	<b>NOR 2027/28</b>	<b>NOR 2028/29</b>
Uplands Academy	1000	718	710	702	696



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## DISCUSSION

- Site boundary (70ha)
- Land within same ownership
  
- Existing constraints**
- - - Public Right of Way (PRoW)
- - - Pedestrian footways on Haven Brook Avenue
- Surface water flooding
- Existing trees/hedgerows to be retained (where possible)
- Ancient woodland & 15m buffer
- Residential boundaries
- Existing speed limit
- Listed building
- Existing pond
- Existing watercourse
- 11-33v High voltage electric cable proposed to be undergrounded (2m easement either side)
- Existing pedestrian access
  
- Proposed opportunities**
- Proposed access point
- Proposed new bus stop adjacent to pedestrian crossing
- Potential primary street network
- Potential recreational route
- Proposed future pedestrian/cycle connection
- Indicative area reserved for attenuation
- Proposed area for play
- Proposed green corridor
- Proposed public open space
- Proposed planting for buffer to listed building

**Key continued**

- Proposed meadow / orchard
- - - Proposed pedestrian/cycle route
- Proposed diversion of PRoW
- Proposed diverted section of PRoW
  
- School site**
- Proposed school access point
- Draft allocations in RDC Emerging Local Plan
- Proposed residential development opportunities (3.67ha @ up to 35dph = 128 homes)
- Proposed 2FE Primary school & nursery site (2.06ha)
- Proposed 2-storey school building (gross area: 2,211sqm)
- Proposed access road, drop-off zone and parking (33 spaces)
- Proposed soft outdoor PE area within school site (0.93ha)
- Proposed hard outdoor PE (MUGA) area within school site (0.103ha)
- Proposed soft informal social area within school site (0.17ha)
- Proposed hard informal social area within school site (0.08ha)
- Proposed habitat area within school site (0.06ha)

Rev.	Date	Description
Land east of Watmill Lane (north), BEXHILL		
Indicative Site Layout		
Job ref: 697	Drawing number: SK01	Revision:
Scale: 1:2500 @ A3	Date: March 2026	

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## Annex B: Site areas

Recommended minimum site areas for all schools	Base area for any:		Area per pupil place for:			
	primary or special school	secondary or middle school	Nursery	Reception and Key Stage1	Key Stage 2-4 & post-16	5 to 11 primary
1. Soft outdoor PE	-	6000	-	-	35	20
2. Hard outdoor PE	400	400	-	1.5	1.5	1.5
3. Soft informal and social area	600	600	2	2	2	2
4. Hard informal and social area	200	200	1	1	1	1
5. Habitat	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5
Float	600	800	2	5	5	5
<b>Minimum net site area</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>8000</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Non-net</b>	350	2000	1	1	5	3.3
<b>Minimum total site area</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>9000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Recommended maximum site areas for new schools</b> (minimum for existing schools where available)						
<b>Maximum net site area</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>9000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Maximum total site area</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>11000</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>42</b>

### Recommended site areas for all types of schools

Note: The net area includes a 'float'. When the recommended minimum areas of each category of space are added together, the total will be less than the recommended total net area. This difference provides the 'float' that can be used to enhance some areas, depending on the priorities of the school.

Where there is limited outdoor space available to pupils on a restricted site, consideration should be given to providing the following:

- firstly, hard informal and social area, including outdoor play area immediately accessible from early years classrooms;
- then hard outdoor PE space, ideally in the form of a multi-use games area;
- then soft informal and social area;
- finally soft outdoor PE area.

# APPENDIX

4





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### DISCUSSION

- Site boundary (70ha)
- Land within same ownership
  
- Existing constraints**
- - - Public Right of Way (PRoW)
- - - Pedestrian footways on Haven Brook Avenue
- Surface water flooding
- Existing trees/hedgerows to be retained (where possible)
- Ancient woodland & 15m buffer
- Residential boundaries
- Existing speed limit
- Listed building
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- Proposed access point
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- Proposed public open space
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**Key continued**

- Proposed meadow / orchard
- - - Proposed pedestrian/cycle route
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Rev.	Date	Description
Land east of Watmill Lane (north), BEXHILL		
Indicative Site Layout		
Job ref: 697	Drawing number: SK01	Revision:
Scale: 1:2500 @ A3	Date: March 2026	

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## DISCUSSION

- Site boundary (70ha)
- Land within same ownership
-  Proposed meadow / orchard & play
-  Vehicular gateway
-  Pedestrian gateway
-  School gateway
-  Future pedestrian connection
-  Landscape corridors (for habitat connectivity)
-  Proposed residential parcels
-  Proposed 2FE primary school & nursery site
-  Draft allocations in RDC Emerging Local Plan
- - - Existing Public Right of Way (PRoW)
- - - Proposed diversion of PRoW
-  Proposed recreational routes
-  Vehicular movement
-  Indicative area reserved for attenuation
-  Existing pedestrian footways on Haven Brook Avenue
-  Listed building

Rev.	Date	Description
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Land east of Watermill Lane (north), BEXHILL

### Vision Plan

Job ref: 697	Drawing number: SK02	Revision:
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Scale: 1:2500 @ A3	Date: March 2026
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BX33

BX31

BX36

BX34

Haven Brook Ave A2691

Watermill Lane

2FE Primary School

Cockrels Wood

Cole Wood

A2691

Cobbs Hill Farm

0 50 100 150 200 250 m

APPENDIX

5



## **Draft Policy BX39 Criteria**

*Showing requested revisions in bold.*

- i. Provide a policy-compliant amount of on-site affordable housing in line with policy HOU2 of the Rother Local Plan;*
- ii. Accord with Policy BX29 of this Plan (North Bexhill Growth Area – Infrastructure Policy) in terms of including direct provision of and/ or financial contributions towards all necessary infrastructure to serve the development along with development in the wider North Bexhill area;*
- iii. Be informed by a landscape sensitivity assessment to determine an appropriate layout, form and detailed design;*
- iv. Include vehicular access(es) from Ninfield Road to include necessary improvements and infrastructure to meet the requirements of East Sussex Council;*
- v. Not include vehicular access from Pear Tree Lane, **other than for emergency access**;*
- vi. Retain the public right of way within the site and include new pedestrian and cycle links within the site, linking to existing public rights of way and public highways outside the site;*
- vii. Include improvements to pedestrian and cycling routes and public transport infrastructure outside the site, to improve links to Sidley District Centre;*
- viii. Include substantial areas of public open space and areas for Biodiversity Net Gain across the site in accordance with Local Plan policy;*
- ix. Include areas of play space (including equipped play space) and any formal playing pitches required (requirement to be informed by ongoing work by the Council);*
- x. Protect the amenity of users of the holiday caravan park adjacent to the site and provide for its continued use;*
- xi. Retain a minimum 15 metres wide undeveloped buffer area (which does not include residential gardens) to all designated ancient woodland within and adjacent to the site;*
- xii. Retain and enhance the existing hedgerows, trees and woodland within the site and on the site boundaries except for any short sections of hedgerow that have to be removed to facilitate access, which should be minimised as far as possible;*
- xiii. Protect the setting of the Grade II Listed Building, The High House, to the north of the site;*
- xiv. Include an assessment and evaluation of the site's archaeological potential and the implementation of any appropriate mitigation measures identified through the assessment;*
- xv. Incorporate appropriate SuDS in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the draft Local Plan (2024) and an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations to demonstrate beyond reasonable scientific doubt that these can be delivered on the site without harming the integrity of the Pevensy Levels Special Area of Conservation/RAMSAR site;*
- xvi. Provide a connection to the local sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, in collaboration with the service provider.*