

1 December 2021		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Pupil Place Plan Update (2021-2025)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Sarah Williams, Service Manager, Education Support Service, Children's Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Education & Skills, Children's Services		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate, Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock Council has undertaken its annual review of pupil places and has published the revised Pupil Place Plan (PPP) 2021 to 2025 version, which can be viewed on the Thurrock Council website [Pupil Place Plan 2021-2025](#) .

The Pupil Place Plan gives information about the supply of school places in Thurrock and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, setting the context of the provision of school places in Thurrock.

The Pupil Place Plan is consulted on each year with all schools and the Schools Forum. This provides a forecasted picture of pupil place planning across Thurrock and helps to identify where we are likely to see capacity issues.

1. Recommendations:

1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the PPP noting the areas within Thurrock that will require additional school places going forward.

2. Introduction and Background:

2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility, who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in a Thurrock school.

2.2 To aid meeting this statutory duty, the Council undertakes an annual review of the PPP. This document is used by many interested parties including potential school sponsors and developers of new dwellings.

- 2.3 As population demographics are dynamic, it is necessary to continually review and update pupil place forecasts. Pupil place requirements are reviewed several times during the year and an annual report is published with the latest forecasts.
- 2.4 The PPP gives information about the supply of school places in Thurrock and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, with information on the changing context within which planning takes place.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The context within which the Council is required to plan school places is becoming increasingly complex and Thurrock has robust processes in place. A PPP team is in place that meets every 4 weeks and is made up of officers from the PPP team, Finance, Admissions, Awards & Benefits, Transport, Early Years and School Improvement to review current positions, issues and forecasts.
- 3.2 Academies, which are their own admission authority are able to admit above their pupil admission number (PAN) although, it must notify the local authority in good time to allow the local authority to deliver its coordination responsibilities effectively. Admission authorities may also admit above their PAN through in-year admissions.
- 3.3 The 2015/16 birth data is still the highest Thurrock has had at 2,505 with the two years either side of that just fractionally below the 2,500 and the current Year 1 is the highest cohort we have had at 2,563. After reaching a peak of 2,505 births in 2015/16, we are now seeing a decline. The 2020/21 birth rate has reduced by 7% from last year. Thurrock's population has become more mobile therefore making projections harder to manage and foresee. During the last few years, the Council has experienced a significant increase in the number of in year applications from families moving into the area.
- 3.4 We continue to see a large number of in year applications annually in Thurrock. From September 2020 to August 2021 a total of 4,012 primary and secondary applications were received.
- 3.5 The School Capital Team work closely with schools and academies in accommodating these large increases by carrying out expansion or adding bulge classes where the need is identified.
- 3.6 Thurrock is made up of a number of planning areas, five for the primary sector: Aveley Ockendon and Purfleet, Grays, Tilbury, Corringham and Stanford-Le-Hope and the rural area. There are three in the secondary sector: West, Central and East, these larger planning areas provide more flexibility when considering pupil placement.
- 3.7 Thurrock has been successful in free school bids of which there are two new secondary schools, Thames Park and Orsett Heath who opened their doors to new students in September 2020 at their temporary sites. Thames Park is on

track to move to the permanent site from 2022. Orsett Heath Academy, which was granted planning permission on 28th October 2021, is scheduled to open in its permanent location in Easter 2023. A new special free school, Treetops 2, which will provide much needed special school provision, has offered a number of places in 2021 with the new building scheduled to open at Easter 2022.

- 3.8 The primary phase forecasts in the 5-year plan are calculated based on known data regarding live births in Thurrock, the number of children already on roll in schools and the anticipated child yield from proposed housing developments in the planning system.
- 3.9 There is currently surplus capacity in the secondary phase following the opening of the two new free schools in temporary accommodation. We anticipate that the surplus capacity in secondary schools will be required going forward as the increased primary population moves through the system. With the development of a number of housing developments across Thurrock we will need these additional places.
- 3.10 Due to an increased number of families moving to Thurrock we are considering opening additional bulge classes in Tilbury, Grays, Aveley, Ockendon and Purfleet planning areas for various Year groups.
- 3.11 As part of the Council's drive to ensure a strategic and proactive approach to pupil place planning regular monitoring is taking place with regular updates on position provided at Schools Forum and Headteachers termly briefings as well as consultation with schools in planning areas where there is a need for additional school places.

4. Reasons for Recommendation:

- 4.1 Section 14(1) of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places for children in their area.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The Pupil Place Plan was sent to the one maintained school and academies for consultation.

6. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

- 6.1 The issues in this paper support the council's vision to be an ambitious and collaborative community, which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future. It also supports the prosperity priority - a borough that enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

School places are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is linked to the number of pupils within school. Funded numbers are lagged by one year, so significant growth can put some short-term pressure on School Budgets. Planned growth agreed with the Local Authority is funded in year from the Dedicated Schools Grant Growth fund.

The Capital costs of providing the infrastructure to provide more School places are generally funded through Basic Needs Capital Grants. These costs would be detailed within the Schools Capital Programme.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer

The Council as an education authority has a duty to promote high standards of education and fair access to education (S13 Education Act 1996). It also has a general duty under S14 of the Education Act 1996, to secure sufficient schools in its area. The duty requires that the schools are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes, and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.

This duty includes securing diversity in the provision of schools, and increasing opportunities for parental choice about school provision.

The Council in exercising its functions under S14, must consider

- (a) the need for securing that primary and secondary education are provided in separate schools (except in relation to middle schools or special schools);
- (b) the need for securing that special educational provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs; and
- (c) the expediency of securing the provision of boarding accommodation (in boarding schools or otherwise) for pupils for whom education as boarders is considered by their parents and the authority to be desirable.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**

Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The Pupil Place Plan aims to inform the Thurrock Capital Programme to improve learning environments for young people, support improvements in standards, raise aspirations and give all children the best possible start in life.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. Background papers used in preparing this report: (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Pupil Place Plan (2021-2025)

9. Appendices to this report:

- Appendix 1: Pupil Place Plan (2021-2025)

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