

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 January 2024
Report for: Information
Report of: Karen Samples, Director of Education

Report Title

School Place Planning and Sufficiency

Summary

This report sets out the way in which the local authority coordinates school place planning, providing detailed information about the sufficiency position for primary and secondary school places and measures being implemented

Recommendation(s)

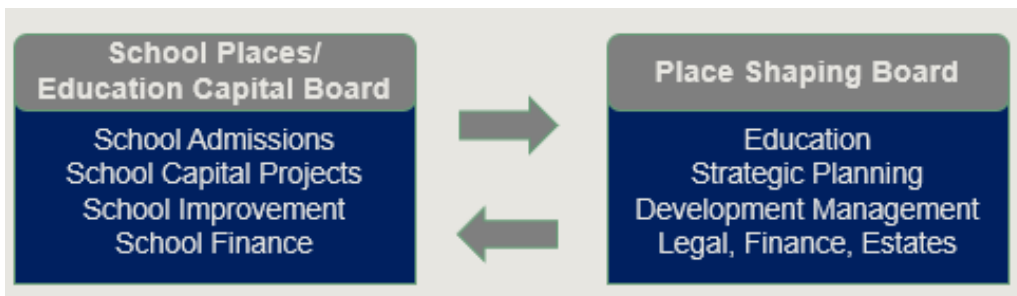
That the contents of the report are noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1. Background

- 1.1 Effective pupil place planning is a fundamental element of the local authority’s (LA) role as strategic commissioner of good school places and ensures the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places is met.
- 1.2 Strategic planning in Trafford is carried out by the following boards, with overarching decision making by Trafford Council Executive:



- 1.3 Achieving the right balance between sufficient places and overprovision is critical to maintain stability within the existing school system and to avoid compounding financial challenges.

1.4 Key strategic priorities:

- Expand existing schools to protect financial viability. The DfE no longer supports the creation of schools with one form of entry (FE).
- Remove mixed age classes in primary schools where possible so schools operate with full forms of entry (FE).

This maximises the impact of basic need funding, whilst providing opportunities to improve the suitability and condition of the existing stock.

1.5 Where there is an assessed need for additional places to be provided through expansion of existing schools, the school will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Location of the school relative to population / catchment area
- Access for pupils by public transport and other sustainable modes of travel
- Current size of the school
- Practicalities of expansion on the existing site
- Costs of expansion
- Latest Ofsted judgement is good or outstanding

1.6 The Department for Education (DfE) requires each local authority to submit an annual statutory return known as the school capacity survey (SCAP) which includes:

- primary and secondary school capacity for the current academic year
- primary pupil number forecasts for the next 5 academic years
- secondary pupil number forecasts for the next 7 academic years
- plans for changes to the number of primary and secondary places for the next 3 academic years

1.7 Trafford's methodology for forecasting pupil numbers complies with statutory guidance and is monitored and ratified by DfE. It utilises data on GP registrations for pre-school age children, school census, admissions information, new housing developments, average migration rates and survival rates.

1.8 DfE utilise the SCAP submission to calculate an estimated number of additional primary and secondary places needed in each area, which informs the LA basic need funding allocation.

1.9 Between 2010 and 2026, Trafford has been allocated £105.6m of basic need funding which has been used to commission the expansion of 38 schools and provide an additional 4,646 places. Trafford has been identified by the DfE as an exemplar local authority with regards to its effective and efficient use of basic need funding.

1.10 The DfE calculation deploys a methodology which assumes each LA will provide places for all pupils who wish to access one in their area. It is important to note this differs from the local sufficiency assessment which is carried out to ensure that the LA meets its duty to ensure sufficient places for all pupils resident in our area.

1.11 Local sufficiency modelling aims to retain a minimum 5% surplus of places to accommodate in-year applicants as this is a significant factor in Trafford, alongside parental preference which is a strong factor in pupil placement.

- 1.12** Trafford has good transport links and high performing, popular schools, many of which are oversubscribed, making it an attractive option for pupils from outside of our area. Trafford being a net importer of school places creates a significant difference between the DfE estimation of additional places needed and the number of places indicated in our local sufficiency assessment.
- 1.13** Demand for school places is influenced by a broad range of social, economic and demographic factors, reflecting wider trends within community and society at a given point in time. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, Trafford saw an unprecedented increase in demand from pupils moving into our area mid-way through their education and this trend continued in 2022/23 which has created significant pressures. Due to this complexity, providing a place for every Trafford resident child has not been easy to achieve but Trafford continues to meet the statutory duty despite the challenges.

2. New Housing Developments

- 2.1** Strategic Planning, Development Management and Education work together to make sure the impact of new developments is accounted for within school place planning. Housing land supply information is shared amongst the services to establish where new homes are going to be delivered, in what numbers and in which years going forward.
- 2.2** To ensure that new development does not over burden the capacity of existing schools, all major planning applications for housing of 10 units or more are the subject of consultation with the relevant Education teams. Where a shortfall is identified in the local area, a contribution may be calculated. All contributions are designed to offset and mitigate the impact of the development. If it is found that there is a need for school places locally, then a formula is employed to calculate a funding requirement proportionate to that need. Once this formula has been calculated, the planning case officer will then negotiate the relevant sum from the applicant, often as part of a wider package of mitigations or benefits.
- 2.3** Education contributions of £1.833m primary and £0.273m secondary secured within s106 agreements to date to meet additional pupils yielded from future new housing developments.
- 2.4** The new strategic plan for Greater Manchester, Places for Everyone, identified strategic allocations at both New Carrington and Timperley Wedge. Both allocation policies recognised the need for new educational provision to accommodate the increased provision of new homes. Additional demand would be met through existing schools to protect their sustainability, subject to engagement with local schools.

3. Sufficiency of Primary School Places

- 3.1** Trafford has determined 6 primary school place planning areas and sufficiency is monitored at planning area level: Altrincham, Sale East, Sale West, Stretford, Urmston, Partington.
- 3.2** DfE 2022 scorecard for Trafford indicates primary forecast accuracy of within 0.0% for 1 year ahead and 0.4% for 2 years ahead and also shows the cost of providing a permanent school place in Trafford is lower than the national figure.

- 3.3** The LA coordinates the main round of admission into reception year. On national offer day in both 2022 and 2023, Trafford had sufficient places in all areas in the main round of admission into reception year, with a surplus number of places in every area.
- 3.4** For entry into reception in 2023, 94.3% of applicants were offered their first preference school (compared to 92.5% in England). This is up from 94.0% in 2022 (compared to 92.2% in England).
- 3.5** The LA is the admission authority for 31 out of 63 primary schools and it coordinates in-year admissions for all these schools by agreement.
- 3.6** Trafford has always experienced a unique pattern of inbound migration into upper year groups in primary schools as pupils get ready to access the selective education system.
- 3.7** In school years 2021/22 and 2022/23, Trafford saw an unprecedented increase in demand from pupils in all primary year groups moving into our area, which created significant pressures through the system.
- 3.8** Before the pandemic, the average number of primary in-year applications received across the school year was 909. In school year 2021/22 a total of 1,414 applications were received, an increase of 56%. This reduced to 1,244 in school year 2022/23, a reduction of 16% on 2021/22, but still 37% higher than the pre-pandemic average.
- 3.9** The table below shows the assessed position for each of the primary planning areas for school year 2023/24 as at the end of the autumn term in December 2023.

Red = Below 3% vacancy rate

Amber = 3 to 6% vacancy rate

Green = More than 6% vacancy rate

Planning Area	Lower Year Groups	Upper Year Groups
Altrincham	Green	Red
Sale East	Amber	Amber
Sale West	Amber	Red
Stretford	Green	Green
Urmston	Amber	Amber
Partington	Green	Green

- 3.10** All primary in-year applications received in the 2023 autumn term, where residency has been confirmed, have been allocated a school place. This means the local authority continues to meet its statutory duty with regards to offering a place although it is noted that parental preference is less likely to be accommodated and in-year applicants may have to travel further to access a place.

3.11 This has been achieved through allocating through the normal admissions process and through utilisation of the Fair Access Protocol (FAP). The FAP is designed to ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible.

3.12 In-year applications, the impact of inbound migration and school vacancy rates (including where the local authority is not the admission authority) are monitored regularly by School Places and Capital Board. Intelligence is shared with Trafford Place Shaping Board and also amongst neighbouring authorities via the GM Pupil Place Planning Group and the regional Educational Building and Development Officers Group (EBDOG). The local authority is working closely with the DfE Pupil Place Planning Team to monitor the sufficiency position and identify potential solutions.

3.13 Catchment areas identify priority areas for admission to community schools, voluntary controlled schools, and to some academies. These areas are reviewed annually to ensure that sufficient places exist in each area, or neighbouring area, to accommodate all the children resident in that area. It is accepted that in some years, a very few schools may not be able to allocate places to all the residents in their area, however, when this occurrence becomes routine, or where there is no suitable alternative provision elsewhere, the provision of additional places or amendments to the relevant catchment areas will be considered.

3.14 The birth rate in Trafford is decreasing, following the national trend. In 2022 there were 2,170 live births in Trafford, representing a 13% decrease over the last 3 years, and the lowest number in a decade. The pupil place planning formula is complex and there are factors that will offset some of this decrease, including in-bound migration into our area in the years between birth and starting school; in-year applicants requiring a school place midway through their education; and new housing developments which will yield additional pupils. However, these factors will not fully offset the birth rate decrease and it does mean that in some areas, less primary school places will be needed in the future.

3.15 Altrincham – primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in WA14 and WA15 post codes.

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	935	965	965	970	985	985	1,000	6,805
No. On Roll	731	825	883	941	951	981	1,026	6,338
No. Vacancies	204	140	82	39	49	20	5	539
% Vacancies	21.8%	14.5%	8.5%	4.0%	5.0%	2.0%	0.5%	7.9%
No. Over PAN	0	0	0	10	15	16	31	72

PAN = published admission number

Measures:

- Willows Primary School - permanent expansion to create additional 15 places in every year group complete, all key stage 2 places now open.

- Broomwood Primary School – 30 places in Y6 bulge class for school years 2022/23 and 2023/24 achieved through conversion of intervention space into classroom.

3.16 Sale East - primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in M33 post codes (east of A56).

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	480	480	510	510	510	510	510	3,510
No. On Roll	444	466	486	498	490	500	518	3,402
No. Vacancies	36	14	26	20	25	19	0	140
% Vacancies	7.5%	2.9%	5.1%	3.9%	4.9%	3.7%	0.0%	4.0%
No. Over PAN	0	0	2	8	5	9	8	32

PAN = published admission number

Measures:

- Templemoor Infant School – additional 30 places open in Y2.
- Moorlands Junior School – permanent expansion to create 30 places in each year group, all classes fully open.

3.17 Sale West primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in M33 post codes (west of A56).

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	395	395	425	425	425	455	425	2,945
No. On Roll	367	373	423	438	429	449	435	2,914
No. Vacancies	28	22	4	0	9	19	4	86
% Vacancies	7.1%	5.6%	0.9%	0.0%	2.1%	4.2%	0.9%	2.9%
No. Over PAN	0	0	2	13	13	13	14	55

PAN = published admission number

Measures:

- Firs Primary School – permanent expansion to create 30 places in each year group complete. Additional classes in Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6 now open.
- Woodheys Primary School – temporary measure – 30 places in Y5 bulge class for 2021/22, moving to Y6 in 2022/23, achieved through conversion of ICT suite into classroom. Further two-year agreement in place for 30 places in Y5 bulge class for 2023/24 moving to Y6 in 2024/25.

3.18 Stretford primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in M32, M16 and M15 post codes (in Trafford).

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	684	684	684	684	684	684	684	4,788
No. On Roll	553	612	623	612	637	665	637	4,339
No. Vacancies	134	78	67	79	58	30	55	501
% Vacancies	19.6%	11.4%	9.8%	11.5%	8.5%	4.4%	8.0%	10.5%
No. Over PAN	3	6	6	7	11	11	8	52

PAN = published admission number

There are sufficient places in all year groups.

3.19 Urmston primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in M41 post codes.

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	3,570
No. On Roll	468	468	520	496	507	490	493	3,442
No. Vacancies	42	42	1	17	8	26	22	158
% Vacancies	8.2%	8.2%	0.2%	3.3%	1.6%	5.1%	4.3%	4.4%
No. Over PAN	0	0	11	3	5	6	5	30

PAN = published admission number

There are current pressures primarily in Y2 and Y4.

Measures:

- Davyhulme Primary School – planning permission achieved for expansion to create 20 additional places in each year group, held as potential future option to meet demand from new housing developments.

3.20 Partington primary planning area

This planning area includes all schools in M31 post codes.

Vacancy position at 31 December 2023:

2023/24 Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
No. Places	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	840
No. On Roll	104	107	108	100	114	84	84	701

No. Vacancies	16	13	12	20	7	36	36	140
% Vacancies	13.3%	10.8%	10.0%	16.7%	5.8%	30.0%	30.0%	16.7%
No. Over PAN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

PAN = published admission number

There are sufficient places in all year groups.

4. Sufficiency of Secondary School Places

- 4.1** Trafford has determined 5 secondary school place planning areas and sufficiency is monitored at planning area level: Altrincham, Sale, Stretford, Urmston, Partington.
- 4.2** The unprecedented surge in demand for primary school places went on to have a significant impact on admissions into secondary school.
- 4.3** The local authority coordinates the normal round of admission into year 7. On national offer day in 2023, there was just enough capacity to offer a place to everyone who applied. However, 92 Trafford children resident in Altrincham and Sale could not be allocated places at any of their preferred schools and were allocated places at the nearest school with a vacancy. At the end of the allocation process, every secondary school in Trafford was full and some schools allocated places above their published admission number.
- 4.4** For entry into Year 7 in 2023, 75.6% of applicants were offered their first preference school (compared to 82.6% in England). This is down from 76.2% in 2022 (compared to 83.3% in England).
- 4.5** The LA is the admission authority for 1 out of 19 secondary schools and it does not coordinate in-year admissions. Due to recent increasing pressure on places and implementation of an improved application system, all secondary in-year applications are now channelled through the LA so there is increased oversight of the position.
- 4.6** The school census data indicates significantly increased levels of demand from in-year applicants moving into Trafford and requiring a secondary school place. Before the pandemic, the average number of new starters in secondary school across the school year was 239. In the school year 2021/22 there were a total of 336 new starters from outside Trafford, an increase of 41% and this elevated level remains in 2022/23.
- 4.7** The table below shows the assessed position for each of the secondary planning areas for the school year 2023/24 as at the end of the autumn term in December 2023.

Red = Below 3% vacancy rate

Amber = 3 to 6% vacancy rate

Green = More than 6% vacancy rate

Planning Area

Lower Year Groups

Upper Year Groups

Altrincham	Red	Red
Sale	Red	Red
Stretford	Green	Green
Urmston	Amber	Amber
Partington	Amber	Green

4.8 The local authority considered expansion of every non-selective secondary school in Sale and Altrincham, prior to commencing the expansion project currently underway at Altrincham College to create an additional 60 places per year group, noting there are no easy expansion options due over-developed sites, limitations of space and communal facilities within existing sites.

4.9 The following smaller projects were carried out to support admission to secondary in 2023:

- Stretford High School – increase the published admission number by 10 places from September 2023.
- Sale High School – minor internal remodelling to accommodate a temporary bulge class of 30 places for September 2023.

4.10 A Priority School Rebuild bid to rebuild two blocks at Sale High School was submitted to the DfE and was successful. The project has been allocated to the second phase of the programme which is provisionally expected to enter delivery from April 2025 with an expected three-year project timeline. In autumn 2023, the DfE strongly advised against creation of any further permanent or temporary additional accommodation on this site ahead of the rebuild project. It may be possible to combine a local authority funded expansion alongside the rebuild project, but this would not create any additional places until 2028 at the very earliest, depending on the DfE programme and so would not help resolve the current pressure.

4.11 Other options to create additional capacity have been considered:

- Schools have been asked to take additional pupils over their published admission numbers. A significant number of additional places across all secondary year groups has already been achieved in this way.
- Explored neighbouring local authority vacancies, primarily along our border areas with Cheshire East and Manchester, but there are limited vacancies. This option is linked to parental preference and whilst some applicants each year have successfully achieved places in other areas, this is in line with the oversubscription criteria for each school, places cannot be guaranteed and availability fluctuates.
- Existing school expansion onto satellite site if non-education accommodation can be identified. Examples of this being done from unused office space in another local authority area but discounted due to the significant operational and curriculum challenges reported by authorities who have done this.
- The potential to establish a new secondary school was fully explored in partnership with the DfE. The outcome was that this is not a feasible option as the evidenced shortfall in demand falls significantly short of the required minimum numbers for a new school.

- 4.12** A number of education capital proposals have been recommended to Trafford Executive which will be considered at the January 2024 meeting, including the permanent expansion of Broadoak School in Partington.
- 4.13** The medium to long term strategy to meet the additional demand for secondary school places expected from new housing developments in the Partington and Carrington area is to expand Broadoak School in Partington. An additional 289 secondary pupils in total are expected from new housing developments within the next 5 years, with additional further demand beyond this. Developer contributions, when secured via Section 106 agreements, will be used to contribute to this project.
- 4.14** A feasibility study is underway to understand the requirements for the 2FE expansion which if approved, will create an additional 300 places in total, to be available from September 2026 with a phased approach to opening them aligned to housing development completion.
- 4.15** In the last two years, due to the pressure on places, an increasing number of families from Sale and Altrincham have accessed a place in Partington, particularly with the support of the recently secured additional school transport route connecting Altrincham, Sale and Partington. It will be possible to create an additional 30 places for Year 7 pupils in September 2024 ahead of the permanent expansion to support with meeting demand if this is required.

Entry to Secondary 2024

- 4.16** Parental preference is a strong factor in pupil placement. Sometimes Trafford parents do not apply for their local school where they have the best chance of achieving a place which can result in places having to be allocated to out of borough pupils who did apply. A Trafford applicant who did not express a preference for a particular school can only be offered a place at that school after allocations have been made to all those who did express a preference, regardless of where they live.
- 4.17** In order to maximise the number of places in Trafford schools which could be secured for Trafford residents, specific tailored advice was provided to Sale and Altrincham residents transferring to secondary school, advising them to apply for all their local non-selective schools. This was largely successful for the 2022 and 2023 admission rounds. On national offer day non-selective academies (excluding the faith school) in these areas only offered to 8 non-Trafford residents compared to 79 in 2021.
- 4.18** On national offer day 2023, there were 37 Sale residents and 55 Altrincham residents who could not be allocated places at any of their preferred schools. Of these, 10 Sale residents and 1 Altrincham resident had followed our advice and included all the schools advised in the guidance. All 92 children were allocated places at one of the 3 remaining schools in Trafford who had vacancies which were Broadoak School in Partington, Lostock High School in Stretford or Wellacre Academy in Flixton.
- 4.19** Similar advice has been produced again for parents with a child due to transfer into secondary school in September 2024. This has been posted to their home address, made prominent on the council website as part of the application information, promoted through relevant primary schools and through a social media campaign.

- 4.20** It is too early in the process for a draft allocation of places to be run whilst the cross-border exchange with other local authorities takes place. However, after initial verification and data cleansing processes, the current data indicates there are 147 less secondary applications submitted on time in 2024 than in 2023.
- 4.21** The LA continues to have regular meetings with DfE to monitor the sufficiency position.