

Bristol Schools Forum **School Places**

Date of meeting:	Tuesday 13 January 2021
Time of meeting:	5.00 pm
Venue:	Zoom

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To update Schools Forum on school place planning across Bristol.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Schools Forum note the contents of this report.

3. Summary

3.1 The city continues to experience a substantial rise in demand for secondary school places. A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to ensure all pupils continue to be offered a school place. Delays to the delivery of a new free school means further temporary places are required for September 2021 and possibly 2022.

3.2 Offers of places at secondary schools will be made on 1st March 2021. Due to the complexity of the multi-preference school place allocation system it is not yet known how many families will receive an offer of a school place that was a preference.

3.3 Numbers of pupils requiring a place in Reception continues to fall. The closing date for applications for Reception is 15th January, with offers being made on 16th April.

3.4 Although progress is being made, providing suitable and sufficient Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places remains a major challenge.

3.5 The increased numbers of pupils entering secondary schools will begin to impact on demand for post-16 places.

4. Context

4.1 Bristol has previously seen a dramatic rise in primary school pupil numbers. Reception admissions peaked in 2016 and since then numbers have been falling, mainly due to falling birth rates.

4.2 These higher primary school numbers are now impacting on secondary schools. A number

of schools have already been expanded and other schools are taking more pupils than their Published Admissions Number (PAN). Taking more pupils than the capacity is not sustainable in the longer term.

- 4.3 The planned development of a secondary free school at Temple Quarter continues to experience serious delays and will not be opening in temporary accommodation for September 2021. The school is part of a wider planning application which has now been 'called in' by the Secretary of State for the Environment and will be subject to a Public Inquiry. It is estimated that this will cause a delay of at least 6 to 12 months and there is a possibility that the application may not achieve consent.
- 4.4 The DfE confirmed on 17th September that it can only pursue opening the new school in temporary accommodation once there is certainty of delivery for the permanent scheme and planning permission has been secured. As planning permission has not yet been secured, a provisional opening date has not yet been confirmed for Oasis Academy Temple Quarter.
- 4.5 Although BCC is not the responsible body for the development or opening of new free schools, it does retain the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. Without the new school and if all schools only admitted up to their Published Admission Number (PAN) there would be an estimated shortfall of 170 Year 7 places for the East Central area for September 2021.
- 4.6 Due to increased demand for Year 7 places in previous years and schools admitted over PAN, there is no capacity in 2021 to expand or provide 'bulge' provision, without adding temporary accommodation.
- 4.7 In order to create capacity, the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF) have proposed relocating the majority of Post 16 students from Bristol Brunel Academy (BBA) and John Cabot Academy (JCA) into an existing CLF academy in South Gloucestershire or into some rental accommodation in the proximity of BS5. Both options will require investment from the CLF. This move would enable approximately 138 additional Year 7 places to be made available in September 2021 and make a significant contribution to the current shortfall. Further discussions are taking place with other schools and this may require additional commitments from the Growth Fund.
- 4.8 The proposed move of Post-16 is temporary as CLF's strategic ambition is to create a permanent Post 16 provision within the BS5 area.
- 4.9 Following a peak in 2016, numbers requiring places at primary schools are now falling and places will need to be managed to avoid large numbers of empty places. A number of schools have already reduced their Published Admission Number and others are considering this. This does not remove the places permanently but makes it easier for the schools to plan staffing levels with more certainty.
- 4.10 Delivery of new homes, particularly in south Bristol, has been slower than anticipated and is not yet impacting on demand for primary school places.

- 4.11 Proposals from the LA to open a single school from 1 September 2021 to replace St Michael's and St George C of E Primary Schools are due to be considered by Cabinet in February. A proposal from the governing body to close St Pius X Catholic Primary School from 31 August 2021 will be also be considered at the same meeting. These proposals result from low pupil numbers over a number of years and no realistic prospect of this situation changing.
- 4.12 Pupil projections are prepared annually for the DFE School Capacity Survey. These projections are used to allocate capital funding ('Basic Need') and also contribute towards decisions to approve the opening of new 'Free Schools'. The School Capacity Survey did not take place in 2020 and the next wave of capital funding for Basic Need will be calculated using 2019 data, for places required in 2022/23. Allocations are likely to remain for single years, making long term capital finance planning very difficult. The allocations relate purely to mainstream places and there is no direct equivalent source of capital funding for SEND provision.
- 4.13 Birth rates are the main factor used in the pupil projection, with factors such as the effect of new housing and historical trends of gain/loss as pupils move through the school years being incorporated. The projections also take account of net 'loss' of pupils to schools in neighbouring local authority areas and the numbers of pupils opting for independent schools.
- 4.14 Year 7 pupil projections and capacities within PANs are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Year 7 pupil forecasts and capacity 2020 - 2024

Year	2020 Oct Census and Projections	Year 7 Capacity
2020/21	4,304	4,209
2021/22	4,510	4,269
2022/23	4,702	4,269
2023/24	4,751	4,269
2024/25	4,791	4,269

Includes 120 places at Trinity in 2020 and additional 60 from 2021. Oasis Temple Quarter and South Bristol not included.

- 4.15 Demand for secondary places is projected to start to fall after 2024, in line with primary school numbers. If both new free schools (Oasis Academy Temple Quarter and Oasis Academy South Bristol) are opened it is unlikely that further additional secondary places will be required in the medium to longer term.
- 4.16 In-year admissions will be once again be very difficult during the 2020/21 year. There will be very few available places in Year 7 for pupils moving into the city or requiring a change of school. Where pupils are offered places in schools that are not preferences and/or are some distance from home can affect behaviour and attendance. This can then result in increasing demand for SEND and Alternative Learning Provision.
- 4.17 Planning for secondary school place requirements is carried out using 3 geographical Planning Areas. Primary forecasts use 14 areas, each made up of a number of council

wards. To ensure comparability with other LAs these areas comply with DfE guidance and can only be changed with the Department's permission. Pupil projections for each area are included in **Appendix 2**.

4.18 Reception pupil projections and capacities within PANs are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Reception Year pupil forecasts and capacity 2020 - 2024

Year	2020 Oct Census and Projections	Reception Capacity
2020/21	5,159	5,726
2021/22	5,202	5,681
2022/23	5,011	5,681
2023/24	4,818	5,681
2024/25	4,877	5,681

Does not include removal of places if proposals for St George and St Michael's and St Pius X are approved.

4.19 Reception admissions peaked in 2016 when 5,581 children started school. Although there is variation some years (there was a small increase in applications for 2020 for instance) the long term forecasts indicate that, without a change to birth rates, demand will continue to fall. For 2023/24 projections indicate there will be around 4,800 children requiring a place.

4.20 There has also been a rise in demand for specialist provision with a large increase in the number of Education and Health Care Plans. The rise is significantly above that which would be expected from the rise in the general school population. Existing specialist provision across the city is at or very close to capacity and will require substantial capital investment.

4.21 In the October Census there were 1,119 pupils in Bristol special schools. Further information on SEND provision is attached in **Appendix 3**.

4.22 Following workshop sessions with school leaders, a programme of works has been identified to begin to increase places for pupils with the highest incidence needs, including ASD and SEMH. Solutions to create additional specialist provision in both special and mainstream schools are currently being explored. The majority of these new places will be available from September 2021 onwards.

4.23 There is no direct 'Basic Need' capital grant funding for SEND places. The DfE have announced £50m of capital for SEND places. It is not yet known how this will be distributed. Previous funding has been allocated based on overall pupil numbers with every LA receiving a relatively small amount rather than a bidding system to target funding.

4.24 Demand for places post-16 is forecast to rise in line with secondary school numbers. The current Year 11 has approximately 3,600 pupils, this increases to around 4,300 for Year 7. The current projection only takes account of pupils registered in school sixth forms in Bristol and does not include those attending BBA, who are registered at John Cabot Academy in South Gloucestershire, or those attending City of Bristol College or St Brendan's College.

4.25 Projections for School Post-16 are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 2: School Sixth Form pupil forecasts and capacity 2020 - 2024

Year	2020 Oct Census and Projections	Year 12 & 13 Capacity
2020/21	2,725	2,700
2021/22	2,857	2,700
2022/23	2,949	2,700
2023/24	3,069	2,700
2024/25	3,229	2,700

4.26 Post-16 numbers vary considerably with many sixth forms operating well above the notional capacity and others well below.

4.27 As mentioned above CLF strategic plans include dedicated post-16 provision in the BS5 area. In addition, Trinity Academy will have a sixth form and plans for Oasis Academy Temple Quarter also include sixth form provision. Although there is more flexibility with accommodating post-16 pupils, some additional capacity will eventually be needed.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There will be financial consequences for the Growth Fund. **Appendix 1** sets out the current and future number of forms of entry that are expected to have a financial implication. This would either be through the mainstream formula for new and growing schools, or it would be through the Growth Fund for expanding schools. Either way, the funding received through the Schools Block DSG for growth would be the main source to pay for this.

5.2 The forecast numbers are based on existing plans and average costs for primary and secondary pupils. Actual costs will vary school by school. Actual numbers of pupils will depend on whether new expansions occur at the expected time and if actual pupil numbers account for the expected full forms of entry. Delays to expansions or variations to actual pupil demand will affect these figures. These numbers are very high level and are less easy to predict the further in the future they relate to.

5.3 The current Growth Fund, has a budget of £2.7m for 2020/21, consisting of the £2.0m allocated plus £0.7m refund of recoupment. Existing commitments suggest spend of £2.3m, allowing some contingency for arising variation. When adding in “New and Growing Schools” which are funded from the schools formula directly then total funding rises to £3.2m and expected commitments total £2.8m.

Table 2: Forecast extra forms of entry and cost to Schools Block 2020-2024

Type of Growth	Sep-20	Sep-21	Sep-22	Sep-23	Sep-24
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TOTAL number of forms of entry (ie classes of 30)	28	24	30	26	23
Forecast cost (£'000)	£2,266	£2,024	£2,720	£2,357	£2,085

5.4 It is clear that Bristol will need to provide for growth for many years to come.

5.5 The report also refers to falling rolls in primary because of a falling birth rate. Schools with falling rolls often experience difficulties in managing the consequent loss of funding. The mainstream funding formula operates on a lagged basis, so a school that had fewer pupils in October, would not bear the loss of any funding for another two terms, at the start of the financial year (or three terms, in the case of academies). Any consideration of a Falling Rolls Fund would need to recognise that this would be a call on Schools Block funding.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Future Growth Fund forecasts

Appendix 2: Primary and Secondary School Pupil Forecasts

Appendix 3: SEND Pupil Information

Appendix 1

High Level forecast of Growth Fund for next 5 years

Type of Growth	Sector	School	Additional Forms of Entry				
			Sep-20	Sep-21	Sep-22	Sep-23	Sep-24
Growth Fund	Primary	Ashton Gate	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Primary	Cotham Gardens	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Primary	St Werburgh	1	0	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Primary	Southville	1	0	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Primary	Whitehall	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Primary	St Bernard's	1	0	0	0	0
Growing school APT	Primary	Redfield	1	0	0	0	0
Growing school APT	Primary	Marksbury	1	1	0	0	0
Growing school APT	Primary	Fairlawn	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Orchard	1	0	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Bristol Free Sch	1	0	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Cathedral	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	City Academy	1	2	2	2	2
Growth Fund	Secondary	Fairfield	1	1	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Redland Green	2	0	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Bristol Brunel	2	3	2	2	1
Growth Fund	Secondary	Bristol Met	2	2	2	1	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Colston Girls	2	2	2	1	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	Cotham	1	1	1	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	St Bedes	1	1	1	0	0
Growing school APT	Secondary	Trinity	4	6	6	6	6
Growing school APT	Secondary	Oasis Temple Q	0	0	8	8	8
Growing school APT	Secondary	Oasis S Bristol	0	0	6	6	6
TOTAL number of forms of entry (ie classes of 30)			28	24	30	26	23

Type of Growth	Sector	Average amount for 7/12ths of year	Sep-20	Sep-21	Sep-22	Sep-23	Sep-24
Growth Fund	Primary	£2,013	6	3	0	0	0
Growing school APT	Primary	£2,013	3	2	0	0	0
Growth Fund	Secondary	£3,022	15	13	10	6	3
Growing school APT	Secondary	£3,022	4	6	20	20	20
TOTAL number of forms of entry (ie classes of 30)			28	24	30	26	23

Forecast cost (£'000)	£2,266	£2,024	£2,720	£2,357	£2,085
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