

People Scrutiny Commission

19 July 2021



Report of: Alison Hurley – Director, Education and Skills

Title: Schools Places Update

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Alison Hurley

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Recommendations: That the Commission note the report

The significant issues in the report are:

Rising demand for secondary school places and falling demand for primary.



1. Background

The number of pupils starting Year 7 has been increasing as the primary bulge years move through. Proportionately fewer Bristol pupils are transferring to schools outside of the city and this has also increased demand. The increase in pupils starting Year 7 may have been restricted by the availability of places and could potentially have been higher if more places had been available, particularly in the east and north of the city. The south has been the area where previously some places have been available after allocation. For the last 2 years every available place, including additional places and overallocations, has been allocated.

After a period of rapid growth, the number of children entering primary schools in the Reception Year has been falling since 2016. This reflects a decline in the birth rate. The slower than expected development of new housing, particularly in the south of the city, means the additional pupils are not yet having a significant impact.

2. Context

Overall numbers of pupils registered at schools in Bristol

The total number of pupils registered at schools in Bristol has been increasing. In October 2016, 58,723 pupils were registered, compared to 62,552 in October 2020, with significant increases in secondary, post-16 and special. The table below shows how these pupils are spread across the different phases.

Numbers on Roll (October Census)

Year	EYs	Primary	Secondary	Post-16	Special	Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)
2016	3,228	35,240	17,047	2,268	834	106
2017	3,119	36,069	17,566	2,382	897	62
2018	2,834	36,221	18,391	2,548	962	64
2019	3,023	36,154	19,187	2,625	1,004	71
2020	2,802	35,869	19,947	2,726	1,119	89

Early Years includes Nursery Classes in Primary Schools

Primary includes 'all-through' primary age but not nursery classes

Secondary includes 'all-through' secondary age but not post-16

Special and PRU include all ages

Secondary

The number of pupils entering Year 7 has been increasing. There were 3,812 pupils in Year 7 in October 2016, increasing to 4,416 by October 2020.

For admission in September 2021, on-time 1st preferences for Bristol schools increased by 2% from 4,465 to 4,553. The number of 1st preference applications from outside the city fell from 330 for 2020 to 262 for 2021.

Offers for Year 7 places were made on 1st March 2021. 4,524 offers were made for Bristol schools. With only 4,233 places available within the admission numbers, there were some temporary increases to Published Admission Numbers (PAN) which state the maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group, and some over-allocation of places in expectation of numbers decreasing.

September 2021 Year 7 Offers made on 1st March 2021.

	Bristol Resident	Resident Outside Bristol	Total
1 st Preference	3280	160	3440
2 nd Preference	493	26	519
3 rd Preference	213	10	223
Non-Preference	342	n/a	342
	4328	196	4524

92.5% of applicants were offered a preference school, with 76% offered their 1st preference. 7.5% were offered a school that was not a preference. For the first time some of these non-preference offers were for a school outside the city (John Cabot Academy). This was much closer for the families than any school that could be offered within the city.

The numbers of places required for September 2022 is forecast to increase to around 4,700. As in previous years, this will require schools to take additional pupils over their Admission Number. Officers are working closely with academy trusts and schools to ensure enough places are available. Pupil projections for each area are shown in appendix 1.

Additional ‘Free Schools’

The new Trinity Academy has made a significant difference with 180 more places each year but the continued delays and uncertainty around the opening of Oasis Temple Quarter has put enormous pressure on the availability of places in east and parts of north. The good relationships with school and academy trusts has meant Bristol has continued to meet the statutory duty to provide sufficient places. Capital investment will be required if there are continued delays to the Temple Quarter school. The Oasis South Bristol school is scheduled to open in 2023.

Primary

The number of pupils entering Reception has been falling since the peak in 2016 when there were 5,581 pupils on roll, falling to 5,180 by October 2020.

Offers for Reception were made on 16th April 2021. 4,863 offers were made for Bristol schools. This number is likely to increase as historically late applications increase the numbers requiring a place. The forecast is that around 5,000 places will be required.

	Bristol Resident	Resident Outside Bristol	Total
1 st Preference	4349	63	4412
2 nd Preference	342	15	357
3 rd Preference	106	2	108
Non-Preference	86	n/a	86

Total	4883	80	4963
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98% were offered a preference school (89% 1st preference). 2% were offered a non-preference school.

The surplus of places in primary is beginning to cause financial concerns for some schools and officers are in communication with governing bodies and leaders.

The closure of St Pius X Catholic Primary and the reorganisation of St George and St Michael's on the Mount C of E Primary Schools to create the new Willow Park C of E Primary (in the St Michael's buildings) will help to reduce surplus capacity.

Additionally, a number of schools have already reduced their planned intake through the annual admission arrangements process. Where demand is lower, some schools are managing their intake down temporarily to help with forward planning of staffing. More schools will need to reduce their intake to avoid having large numbers of surplus places but it is important to retain capacity that can be brought back in to use if pupil numbers rise again.

Officers are working with schools to identify where excess capacity can be used for other education priorities, particularly around the need to increase SEND capacity.

The projected requirement for September 2022 is for around 4,800 places. Pupil projections are shown in appendix 1.

Appendices:

- 1. Projections for July Scrutiny 2021*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None