

Bristol Schools Forum School Sufficiency

Date of meeting:	23 May 2023
Time of meeting:	5.00pm
Venue:	Zoom Meeting
Report Author:	Reena Bhogal-Welsh (Director of Education & Skills)

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 rising in demand for secondary school places. Working with schools and academies all pupils were offered a school place in Year 7 for September 2023. 92% were offered a preference school, with 76% being offered their first preference. This is a slight reduction on 77% in 2022.

3.2 2 new free schools will open in September 2023 on temporary sites. Admissions have been outside the coordinated process and some parents were advised to also apply for an existing school within the coordinated process.

3.3 Places must be offered for all applicants through the coordinated process, resulting in some pupils receiving 2 offers. LA officers are working with Oasis to establish which offer the parent will choose.

3.4 Some capital works at some schools, required as a result of the continued need to admit over Published Admission Number (PAN) are still to be completed. This is partly due to the current economic climate and partly due the complexities of changing PFI contracts. Although funding was agreed by Cabinet in February, this was too late for some works to be completed and both Bristol Brunel Academy and Orchard School felt unable to accept further additional pupils for 2023.

3.5 The opening of the new free schools should mean a large reduction in the numbers of additional places required from 2024. There remains a forecast shortfall of places in North.

- 3.6 The trend of a reduction in the number of pupils requiring a place in Reception continues. Offers were made on 17 April, with 99% of pupils being offered a preference school, with 92% being offered their first preference. Further work with schools and trusts to co-ordinate the management of surplus primary places is planned.
- 3.7 There continues to be good progress in increasing the sufficiency of suitable Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places. The Specialist Provision Project has delivered 162 places so far, and together with other capital works the project forecasts to deliver 501 places by September 2025.
- 3.8 The increased numbers of pupils entering secondary schools will begin to impact on demand for post-16 places.
- 3.9 There is a need to review the geographical areas served by some schools to take account of new schools and demand changes. Work on this will begin May 2023, with any changes subject to consultation in the annual admission arrangements process starting in October.

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 continued to fall, mainly due to falling birth rates.
- 4.2 These higher primary school numbers have been impacting on secondary schools for a number of years. Many schools have already been expanded and other schools have been taking pupils above PAN. Delays to the new free schools mean this requirement has been much longer than initially expected. For any school, taking more pupils than the capacity is not sustainable in the longer term, without significant capital investment and the complexities of PFI arrangements at some schools make admitting additional pupils even more challenging.
- 4.3 The new free school projects are managed directly by the DfE and after some delays both new free schools now have planning permission in place for their permanent sites at Daventry Road and Silverthorne Lane. Both schools will open on temporary sites in September 2023.
- 4.4 Oasis Academy Daventry Road will open on a temporary site at Oasis John Williams in September 2023 and will provide up to 6 additional forms of entry (180 places per year).
- 4.5 Oasis Academy Temple Quarter will initially open in a building on the Oasis Brislington site in September 2023, before re-locating to the longer-term temporary site at Spring Street in Bedminster for January 2024. Due to the size of the building at Brislington, places are initially limited to 90, increasing to 120 after the move to Spring Street. This will provide some much needed in-year capacity from January.
- 4.6 Both schools have Funding Agreements in place. Admissions have been administered by Oasis, outside the co-ordinated admission scheme, where parents make applications to the LA for places in Year 7. Places were offered on 1 March, the same day as places under the coordinated scheme. Officers are working with Oasis to establish which offer parents will

choose.

- 4.7 All parents were advised to apply for a place at an existing school under the coordinated scheme and a place was offered on 1 March. Some schools will face uncertainty about precise numbers starting in September whilst the process of cross checking with Oasis is undertaken and the appeals process is completed.
- 4.8 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 and continuing to offer all pupils places has been very challenging. Academy Trusts and individual schools have played a major role in supporting the LA by agreeing to admit additional pupils to meet the shortfall caused by delays to the free school projects.
- 4.9 For the East Central area, the delays to capital funding being agreed and the lengthy process for PFI contract changes meant that Bristol Brunel Academy felt unable to agree to take additional students for 2023. Both City Academy and Bristol Metropolitan Academy did agree additional students, which together with new Temple Quarter free school will ensure sufficient places in the area. Schools in the area should not need to admit over PAN in future as Temple Quarter should ensure sufficiency.
- 4.10 In North there is projected to be a continued deficit of places. Works to redesign space at Orchard previously used for primary age pupils should create the additional capacity required. The opening of Oasis Temple Quarter should also help to accommodate some pupils in the central area to relieve pressure on some North area schools.
- 4.11 The South area continued to experience some over capacity for a number of years, but this situation has changed quickly, with an increase in pupils requiring places. The new Daventry Road free school will ensure sufficiency in future but some capital works are required to ensure sufficient space for both secondary pupils and special school pupils on the Bridge Learning Campus/New Fosseyway site, where spaces were previously redesigned.
- 4.12 Although it was possible to offer all pupils a place at secondary school transfer there will be very few remaining spaces within secondary schools across the city. There remain whole areas of the city without places in some year groups. This continues to impact on in-year admissions with an increase in school appeals and placements through 'Fair Access' arrangements, putting these systems under increasing strain. There will be very few available places in any year groups 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.
- 4.13 Following a peak in 2016, numbers requiring places at primary schools continue to fall and places will need to be managed to avoid large numbers of empty places. A proposal was published to close St Barnabas C of E Primary in August 2023 and this was agreed by Cabinet in February. Officers are working with the school to ensure all pupils are offered a suitable alternative school.
- 4.14 Additionally, a number of schools have already reduced their PAN and others are

considering this. Officers continue to work with schools to manage the places. The places are not removed permanently but reducing PAN can make it easier for the schools to plan staffing levels with more certainty. Alternative uses of any empty space needs to be considered, including for SEND provision, if appropriate.

- 4.15 There are no indications that the falling birth rate will rise in the foreseeable future and the delivery of new homes, particularly in south Bristol, has been slower than anticipated and is not yet impacting on demand for primary school places.
- 4.16 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 latest announcement does not allocate any Basic Need capital to Bristol for 2025/26. This is because the new schools will ensure there is projected to be sufficient capacity.
- 4.17 The last pupil projections were included with the November 2022 Place Planning Report but are repeated here for ease of reference. New projections will be prepared for the next survey in July.
- 4.18 Year 7 pupil projections and capacities within PANs are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Year 7 pupil forecasts and capacity 2022 - 2026

Year	Jan 2022 Census and Projections	Year 7 Capacity
2021/22	4,431	4,269
2022/23	4,569	4,276
2023/24	4,594	4,276
2024/25	4,642	4,276
2025/26	4,373	4,276

Oasis Temple Quarter and South Bristol not included.

- 4.19 Demand for secondary places is projected to start to fall after 2024/25, in line with previous primary school numbers. Demand in north continues to be in excess of places for some time.
- 4.20 Reception pupil projections and capacities within PANs are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Reception Year pupil forecasts and capacity 2022 - 2026

Year	Jan 2022 Census and Projections	Reception Capacity
2021/22	4,977	5,746
2022/23	4,902	5,596
2023/24	4,701	5,536
2024/25	4,514	5,536
2025/26	4,557	5,536

- 4.21 Reception admissions peaked in 2016 when 5,581 children started school. Although there

is variation in some years (there was a small increase in applications for 2020 for instance) the longer-term forecasts indicate that, without a change to birth rates, demand will continue to fall.

4.22 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 has been at or very close to capacity and a programme to increase places is progressing well.

4.23 In the October 2022 Census there were 1,211 pupils in Bristol special schools, compared to 1,119 in October 2021.

4.24 Significant progress has been made to increase SEND provision. 282 places have been delivered already with the remainder of places forecast for delivery between September 2023 and September 2025.

4.25 There is no direct 'Basic Need' capital grant funding for SEND places. The DfE have announced further 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.

4.26 Demand for places post-16 is forecast to rise in line with secondary school numbers. The current Year 11 has approximately 3,666 pupils, compared to around 4,421 for Year 7. The current projection only takes account of pupils registered in school sixth forms in Bristol and does not include pupils attending CLF post-16 provision, City of Bristol College or St Brendan's College. The projections below may be higher than actual numbers as place availability in the more popular provisions is restricted and students unable to gain a place choose to attend a college provision rather than smaller school sixth forms.

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

Table 2: School Sixth Form pupil forecasts and capacity 2022 - 2026

Year	2021 Oct Census and Projections	Year 12 & 13 Capacity
2022/23	2,981	2,700
2023/24	3,131	2,700
2024/25	3,316	2,700
2025/26	3,371	2,700

4.28 Post-16 numbers vary considerably with many sixth forms operating well above the notional capacity, with more flexibility of timetabling and others well below capacity.

4.29 Trinity Academy will have a sixth form in future 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

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Report date: 23 May 2023

- 5.1 There will continue to be a requirement for the Growth Fund as the bulge in secondary numbers works through schools. the foreseeable future. Most primary schools have now completed their growth and do not require further funding but the funding requirement for additional secondary school places is rising. Delays or variations to actual pupil demand will affect the funding required.
- 5.2 Future capital availability will be very limited with no Basic Need allocation from 2025/26.