

Meeting date: 25th May 2023

Report to: Solihull School Forum

Subject/report title: Mainstream demographic update

Report from: Director of Children's Services

Report author/lead contact officer: Ann Pearson Team Leader – School Place Planning



Schools affected:

All Schools

Type of Report For information

Forum Voting Not a voting matter - for information item

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Finance Work Group on the ongoing pressure on the supply and demand of school places and to provide a demographic update.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 For information

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 The School Organisation Plan outlines how the Council meets its statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places.

3.2 Each year work is undertaken to update the demographic data outlined in the plan to ensure any key actions or priorities identified are still appropriate.

Primary mainstream

3.3 Over recent years Solihull has seen a significant rise in primary cohorts being admitted at Reception, which was managed through the creation of over 1,500

primary school places, delivered through permanent school expansions.

- 3.4 The October 2022 pupil census shows that we are operating with 4% surplus places across primary whole school rolls. This is completely in line with DfE guidance of between 2% and 5% surplus places to accommodate in-year migration.
- 3.5 However, this high level analysis is masking a change in trend that shows that this spare capacity is not evenly spread across year groups. Whilst Solihull is experiencing significant pressure on places in KS2 in some areas of the Borough, there has been a significant drop-off in demand for reception and year 1 places. At October 2022 census, there were 230 empty reception places (8%) equivalent to over 7 forms of entry and in Year 1 there were 184 places (6%).
- 3.6 Solihull has historically experienced between 8% and 10% growth in cohorts between birth and Reception intake, this equates to circa 200 places or 6 to 7 forms of entry. In 2020 the 0 to 4 migration dropped to just 3% and for 2021 and 2022 it dropped to 0%. Early indications from Reception offers for September 2023 is that it is a similar picture for this year.
- 3.7 In addition to this drop in migration, local health data is showing a 9% drop in the birth rate, which will impact reception intakes in September 2024 and 2025, equivalent to a further 6.5 forms of entry. Assuming that the out of borough demand for Solihull places continues at current levels, forecasts show that by September 2025 we will be operating with up to **17 forms of entry or over 500 empty reception places**.
- 3.8 At KS2 the picture is very different. Some parts of the Borough have been experiencing a significant growth in in-year migration. Data analysis shows that historically Solihull has experience negative in-year migration, meaning over the period of an academic year more children would move away from the area than move in. It is this pattern that has always enabled us to accommodate children moving into the area.
- 3.9 However, over the last two years this has changed. The October 2022 pupil census shows that primary school rolls had a net growth of 250 pupils from the same period the previous year. Year 3 in October 2020 had net growth of over 90 children (3 FE) by October 2022 when it was Year 5.

Secondary mainstream

- 3.10 Secondary whole-school rolls have been increasing year on year as the primary bulge now moves into the secondary phase. Over 600 permanent secondary school places have been added to accommodate the growth in numbers. At October 2022 census we were operating with 0% capacity across all secondary year groups. Nationally September 2023 is expected to be the largest Year 7 cohort with many authorities starting to see a drop in applications from September 2024.
- 3.11 As with primary, our secondary whole-school rolls have historically seen negative in-year migration. However, October 2021 showed a significant reduction in this trend, particularly across years 7 and 8 and secondary schools in the Central and West part of the Borough are now experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers.

- 3.12 The rapid rise in places in years 5 and 6 at primary is having a huge impact on Year 7 intake. For September 2023, 3 Year 7 bulge classes have been added with other schools agreeing to offer over their published admission number.
- 3.13 Modelling the in-year growth in the primary phase it now appears that the peak in primary children moving through to secondary in Solihull will be in September 2027. However, there is expected to be some reduction for September 2024 and September 2025 with numbers rising again for September 2026 and 2027. **From September 2028 onwards, if current trends continue, then we would expect to see a fall in Year 7 intake of around 300 children (10FE).**

In-year migration

- 3.14 Solihull is experiencing unprecedented demand from in-year applications, particularly from families relocating from Hong Kong under the Government's relocation scheme but also from Ukrainian families under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- 3.15 Between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2023 Solihull has accommodated 1,348 Hong Kong children across all year groups, equivalent to **45 forms of entry**. This is in addition to any other migration from other areas of the world or within the UK. Solihull's migration of Hong Kong families is the largest in the West Midlands and one of the highest nationally.
- 3.16 The extent of this migration is putting severe strain on school places across primary and secondary phases. Bulge classes have already been added in Years 4, 5 & 6 at primary and Years 7, 8 and 9 at secondary. However, the latest admissions data is showing that we will continue to have ongoing pressure across the whole of KS2 in the majority of South Solihull and all of KS3 at Secondary for the remainder of this academic year.
- 3.17 The Council must meet its statutory duty to offer a school place to every child in Solihull that wants one. Where there are no places, schools are being asked to admit pupils over their published admission limit or above the 30 class size limit. All secondary in-year applications are being considered by the Fair Access Panel.
- 3.18 It has only been due to the support and co-operation of schools that the has enabled the council to meet its statutory duty and this is much appreciated.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The demographic picture in Solihull is complicated. Over the coming years the data is showing that there will need to be a process for rationalising reception places but with an ongoing expansion at KS2. At secondary phase there will need to be ongoing expansion of places to meet both increasing Year 7 demand up to 2027 and the ongoing in year demand from migration.
- 4.2 For September 2023, bulge classes are being added in Years 3, 4 and 5 in addition to the existing bulge classes currently operating. At secondary, 3 year 7 classes have been added and additional places agreed for Years 8 and 9.
- 4.3 Without the creation of additional places, the Council is having to ask schools to admit

pupils over their published admission limit or above the 30 class size limit. All secondary in-year applications are being considered by the Fair Access Panel.

- 4.4 The demographic update this year will then inform the requirements for bulge classes over the next 3 to 4 years and the process for identifying schools and locations will follow, in an attempt to get ahead of the demand.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The rolling programme of bulge classes that is now underway will enable the Council to provide a flexible response to fluctuating demand in different localities in the Borough.

- 5.2 What is key, is to work with schools on delivering a structured plan for the delivery of additional space and capacity.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 Impact on schools:

- 6.2 The Council must meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and it can only do this with the support of schools.

- 6.3 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

- 6.3.1 The provision of additional space will ensure that all children and young people in Solihull that want a school place can access one. The flexibility provided through a programme of bulge classes should endeavour to provide a place as close to a child's home as possible.

- 6.4 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.4.1 The School Organisation Plan is used as a basis for working with schools to deliver the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The latest demographic update will be shared with Schools over the remainder of the Summer Term and will form the basis for an updated School Organisation Plan to be considered by Cabinet Member in September 2023.

- 6.4.2 Information will be shared with Schools through Head's Partnership in May. Data will then be shared with schools through collaboratives and/or Trusts.

- 6.5 Financial implications:

- 6.6 There are no financial implications as a direct consequence of this report. However, where bulge classes are required, there are revenue implications and moving forward there will be capital requirements.

- 6.7 The DfE allocates basic need capital to the Council to enable additional mainstream school places to be added. The latest allocation of basic need funding is for £7.8M for 2025/27 which is predicated on annually submitted mainstream forecasts and recognises the ongoing increasing demand for school places in Solihull.

6.8 School's Forum has approved growth criteria to identify additional revenue funding for those schools' experiencing growth in pupil numbers. The growth criteria are included as an appendix in the School Organisation Plan. The revenue cost of the additional pupils is funded entirely from increases in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). For 22/23 financial year the DfE allocated an advance of £780,000 in growth funding to Solihull to reflect the pressure being experienced.

6.9 Legal implications:

6.10 The Local Authority has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of Solihull resident children.

6.11 Risk implications:

6.11.1 The two key risks are that the additional school places cannot be added in time to meet the growth in demand for Solihull children and that the proposed costs of individual proposals exceed the resources available.

6.12 Equality implications:

6.12.1 None as a result of this report

6.13 Linkages to work with other partners:

6.13.1 None as a result of this report.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 None

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 None

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 None