

Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY SELECT COMMITTEE

Delivery of Additional School Places and Admissions

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mohon Ali (Member for Education and Skills)

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1st September 2022

Purpose of the Report

To provide a briefing and update to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee (PVFM) on delivery of school places and school place preference rates for the borough.

To provide an update on the delivery of additional school places and the work of Education Support Services including: -

- Pupil Numbers
- Allocation of school places by ward
- The percentage of residents who are offered a school place of choice (1st or top 3 preferences)
- Overview of the current school place plans
- Future to increase parental choice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the committee note the contents of the report and feedback any comments and suggestions to the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years and the Head of School Support Services.

Additional School Places and Admissions

1 Background

1.1 School Places and Pupil Numbers Overview: -

The Local Authority (LA) has seen a slight dip in the numbers of Primary age pupils in schools. In 2020 the January census recorded 24676 pupils in Oldham schools, whilst the number from 2022 is 24538. In Secondary schools the number continues to rise; in 2020 there were 16740 secondary pupils, this now stands at 17699. These numbers include children attending special schools and the pupil referral unit.

In secondary there is place pressure in some year groups, leaving a small number of surplus places available.

The usual situation exists of the borough having some extremely popular secondary schools and others that are less popular. New provision at the Brian Clarke Academy will give the borough much needed places and further choice for residents who may otherwise struggle to get places at more popular schools.

Ahead of September 2022 Brian Clarke Academy did their own place allocation as a new free school, so these are not included in the data for this year as the places on offer were conditional on the school opening in September 2022, which has now been confirmed. The Brian Clarke Academy will be further established into the admissions process next year as they will then be part of our allocation, and the places at the school will impact fully on the data allocation in 2023.

Primary has place pressure in year 3 and 4, however all planning areas have at least one school with places in each year group. For many year groups there are several schools with available places. The borough currently has 10.6 % spare capacity in the primary sector.

Oldham continues to be a net importer of pupils with 250 secondary places and 75 primary places offered to non-Oldham residents.

1.2 School Allocation Data (Secondary)

Appendix One shows the detail for 1st and top 3 preferences in Oldham for secondary places. In 2020, 75% of residents were offered their first choice of secondary school. This increased to 75.7 % in 2021 and to 76 % this year. In 2021, 89.9% of pupils gained a place at one of their top 3 preferences of secondary school and in 2022 this had increased to 91.2 %. National rates are included for comparison.

Please note that this data does not include the Brian Clarke Academy as places offered at that school this year were conditional. In 2023 the data will include the Brian Clarke Academy. Information in relation to places offered at the Brian Clarke Academy are included in Appendix 3.

1.3 School Allocation Data (Primary).

Appendix One also shows first preferences rates for primary places. In 2021 to 93.7 % of pupils gained a place at their first preference school, this has increased this year to 95.2

% . In 2021, 98.3 % of pupils gained a place at one of their 3 top preferences for primary schools, this increased to 98.4 % in 2022. National rates are included for comparison.

2 Current Position (Secondary and Primary School Places)

- 2.1 The opening of Brian Clarke Academy will provide 240 additional places from September 2022. The academy will start in temporary accommodation on the current Blue Coat School site before moving to the new site on Bloom Street in April 2023.

The new Saddleworth School site opened in February 2022 and will offer an additional 20 places per year group.

With previous expansions and the opening of the above schools we do not anticipate any need to expand secondary schools for a considerable number of years. On the current data available we do not anticipate any pressure on secondary places in the short to medium term.

Regarding primary provision there is adequate provision in place going forward in all planning areas apart from Chadderton. The Department for Education has approved a new Primary School in Chadderton (Caderton Primary School) which will provide additional places and a resource centre for children with SEND. The LA has also supported a small expansion of St Margarets' Primary School in response to parental demand in that area of Hollinwood.

3 Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss

- 3.1 Sufficiency in the mainstream sector has now reached a stage there are surplus places in most planning areas of the borough. The key challenges for the borough are to rapidly improve schools and academies that require improvement as this will increase the number of places available at good and outstanding schools. This will result in more parents gaining a place in the school of their choice and boost the overall first preference rates particularly in the secondary sector. Dependent on future need we will continue to expand only good or outstanding provision in order to meet the preferences of parents.

4 Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider

- 4.1 I am happy to provide a further update to the board next year, when I anticipate the number of first preference allocations in the secondary sector to have increased because the data will include the heavily oversubscribed Brian Clarke Academy.

5. Links to Corporate Outcomes

- 5.1 A key link is the ambition to develop a co-operative service with the LA Admissions taking ownership to drive change and continue to work with a resident focus.

6 Additional Supporting Information

- 6.1 N/a

7 Consultation

- 7.1 N/a

8 **Appendices**

8.1 Appendix One- Overall Preference Data (Local and National)

8.2 Appendix Two- Local Preference Data by Ward

8.3 Appendix Three - Brian Clarke Academy Allocation for September 2022