

Report to Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board

Delivery of Additional School Places and Admissions

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

Officer Contact: Matt Bulmer (Director of Education, Skills, and Early Years)

Report Author: Andy Collinge (Head of School Support Services)

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Purpose of the Report

To provide a briefing and update to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board on (1) delivery of school places and (2) school place preference rates within the Local Authority (LA.)

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

- 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 demand for school places

Recommendations

It is recommended that the board 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

Current predictions show a decreasing demand for places in the primary sector. Predictions for 24/25 are 23,657 dropping to 20,674 by 2030. Demand for secondary places is predicted to remain consistent at around just over 19,000 until demand drops in around 2030.

In the secondary phase most schools are full; however, we do have places available in the following schools: Royton and Crompton, the Oldham Academy North, Radclyffe and Waterhead Academy. There are no current pressures on secondary places.

The usual trend exists of some extremely popular secondary schools and others that are less popular. The new provision in The Brian Clarke Academy has given the LA much needed places and further choice for residents who may otherwise struggle to obtain places at other schools.

1.2 Secondary School Allocation Data

Appendix 1 shows the detail for 1st and top 3 preferences in Oldham for secondary places by ward. In 2023, 80.4% of residents were offered their first choice of secondary school; this decreased to 75.7% in 2024. In 2023, 91.2% of pupils gained a place at one of their top 3 preferences of secondary school; in 2024 this had increased to 94.1%. In the majority of wards over 90% of residents are offered a place at one of their top 3 preferences. National rates for secondary for first preferences are 82.9% and top 3 preferences are 94.6%.

1.3 Primary School Allocation Data

Appendix 2 shows first preferences rates for primary places in Oldham by ward. In 2023 92.9% of pupils gained a place at their first preference school; there has been an increase this year to 94.1%. In 2023, 96.6% of pupils gained a place at one of their 3 top preferences for primary schools; this has increased to 98.1 % in 2024. National rates for primary places are first preferences 93.2% and top 3 preferences 98.6 %.

2 Current Position (Secondary and Primary School Places)

2.1 The Brian Clarke Academy is now open at its permanent location on Bloom Street; the school has given a significant boost to the number of pupils gaining places in their school of choice.

Due to the opening of the Brian Clarke Academy and previous secondary expansions, it is not anticipated that secondary expansion will need to be considered for several years.

There has been and will continue to be a significant downturn in demand for primary school places with significant surplus places in the borough; this is particularly the case in the East Oldham, West Oldham, Royton, and Saddleworth planning areas. We are currently working with schools to manage this issue and a number of schools have either reduced their PAN (Planned Admission Number) or are in the process of doing so.

3 Key Issues for the Scrutiny Board to Discuss

3.1 Sufficiency in the mainstream sector has now reached a stage there are surplus primary places in most planning areas of the borough; officers are working closely with schools, Trusts and Manchester and Salford Dioceses to manage this. There remain several secondary schools in the borough that 'require improvement' and these are in the process of joining strong Multi Academy Trusts.

4 **Key Questions for the Scrutiny Board to Consider**

4.1 There is an increased demand for SEND Resource Bases in the borough. To date we have funded the development of resource bases in 5 schools which has resulted in the creation of 64 additional places for children who can attend mainstream schools but may need additional support. Further developments in this area are planned over the coming academic year.

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**

8.2 Appendix 1: Secondary Preference Data by Ward

8.3 Appendix 2: Primary Preference Data by Ward