

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 6 September 2023

Subject: School Places

Report of: Strategic Director (Children and Education Services)

Summary

This report provides an overview of Manchester's current school age population and the numbers forecast for future academic years. It also details work previously undertaken to create additional school places to ensure Manchester meets its sufficiency duty. In 2023 this resulted in 92% pupils who applied on time for a year 7 place being allocated a place at a 1st to 3rd preference school on national offer day which is an increase from the previous year and 99 % of children who applied on time for a reception place being allocated a 1st to 3rd preference school on national offer day.

The report shows that demand for school places continues to increase and that between January 2022 and January 2023 the school population grew by 1,028. This increased demand for places is particularly evident at secondary phase as larger cohorts move through the primary phase and also in demand for special school places. This report outlines the work that is planned to achieve sufficiency of places across the City in response to this continued growth.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The ongoing growth of the City's education sector will continue to create opportunities for employment in schools and those businesses which are involved in the supply of goods and transport services.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	A sufficiency of high-quality education provision which is easily accessible to families will provide future generations with the skills and behaviours to benefit from the City's economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Schools are environments in which the diversity and talent of Manchester's children and young people is celebrated. Pupils are supported and encouraged to achieve their aspirations and maximise their potential.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Investment in modern, energy efficient and high-quality education infrastructure drives reductions in carbon across the estate of schools.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Investment in existing and new education provision will enhance the City's attractiveness to potential residents and contribute to the development of high-quality neighbourhoods.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The additional primary and secondary school places will be funded from Dedicated School Grant. The funding is based on pupil numbers and pupil characteristics. Start-up costs of new mainstream school's set-up through Local Authority free school presumption will be funded by Manchester's Dedicated Schools Grant growth fund.

The additional special school places will be funded through the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Financial Consequences – Capital

Investment in a new mainstream and special school places will be resourced from the High Needs Capital and Basic Need grants within the current Capital Programme

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of Manchester's current school age population and the numbers forecast for future academic years. It also details work previously undertaken and that which is planned to achieve a sufficiency of school places.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council has a legal duty to secure sufficient school places and achieves this through the commissioning of additional capacity in existing schools or by developing new schools using its basic need capital allocation and undertaking a free school presumption process or through the national free schools' route. This additional capacity is commissioned based on forecasts of future demand across primary, secondary, and specialist provision.

3.0 The School Age Population

- 3.1 Our Manchester has a focus on children having the best start in life and a positive and successful educational experience, attending a good or better school. Ensuring that residents have access to high quality schools within their local area is central to achieving the Our Manchester Strategy. Achieving a sufficiency of high-quality school places to meet need continues to require considerable investment, strategic planning and partnership with schools and school providers across the city, as the overall number of pupils continue to increase year on year and, increasingly, throughout each year.
- 3.2 The range of factors which influence demand for school places is extensive and complex. It includes birth rate, migration to and movement around the City, the impact of welfare reforms, new housing developments, and changing patterns of parental preference for schools, restrictions on the supply of school places outside the City e.g., neighbouring authorities, changing economic circumstances and successful regeneration.
- 3.3 In recent years there has been a slowing of the birth rate in some areas of the city which is forecast to continue. As a result of this, several schools are experiencing reduced demand for admissions into reception and, in some cases, lower key stage 1 numbers. This can result in funding challenges due to the way the Department for Education use census data to allocate funding. These lower numbers do not generally persist into key stage 2 as pupils arriving in-year to the city top-up cohorts as they progress. This trend will continue to be monitored, and where necessary, schools will be supported to adjust to varying demand.
- 3.4 The COVID19 pandemic, associated lockdowns, and restrictions of movement resulted in reduced in-year demand for school places. Since restrictions ended there has been a significant increase in demand for school places by those arriving in the city. This is placing considerable pressure on all secondary schools and some primary settings in specific locations and year groups.

- 3.5 In addition to the growth in demand post pandemic, Manchester has also received a significant volume of international new arrivals including Afghan and Ukrainian nationals who arrived in the city as part of the Government’s resettlement schemes requiring school places.
- 3.6 The school census (PLASC – Pupil Level Annual School Census) is a statutory data return to the Department for Education which takes place during the autumn, spring, and summer terms and collects information about individual pupils. The annual school census completed in January 2023 showed 82,950 pupils attending Manchester Schools compared to 81,922 pupils in January 2022 – this snapshot shows growth of 1,028 pupils across the mainstream primary and secondary phases within a year.
- 3.7 Manchester’s year 7 mainstream cohort was 6859 and further demand is anticipated throughout the year as families continue to arrive in the city. All children who applied on time for a year 7 place received an offer with 76% being allocated a place at their 1st preference school on national offer day. Manchester’s Reception mainstream cohort was 6310 and further demand is anticipated throughout the year as families continue to arrive in the city. All children who applied on time for a reception place received an offer with 95% being allocated a place at their 1st preference school on national offer day. Manchester’s statistics for both national offer days are published on the Council’s website and are attached as an appendix to this report.
- 3.8 Projections of anticipated pupil demand were submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2022 as part of the School Capacity Survey (SCAP). The forecasts identify the projected number of places required to meet the Council’s sufficiency duty and determine its Basic Need funding allocation for future years.

Academic Year	Y0	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
2022-23	6415	6864	7074	7225	7147	7350	7322
2023-24	6301	6529	6900	7128	7298	7194	7434
2024-25	5722	6414	6563	6952	7200	7345	7277
2025-26	5710	5824	6447	6613	7022	7247	7430

Academic Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
2022-23	6890	6767	6646	6427	6331
2023-24	6985	6986	6831	6723	6471
2024-25	7066	7083	7050	6909	6771
2025-26	6900	7166	7149	7130	6958

- 3.9 As part of the overall growth there is ongoing demand for specialist places. Nationally, the actual numbers and proportion of pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have increased with the overall percentage now at 4.3% of the whole school population. Within the Manchester school

population, the January 2023 census showed that 5.4% of the school population have an EHCP (5,034 pupils). In Manchester the number of pupils attending special schools is growing and now stands at 2.3% of the total school population.

4.0 Approach to Securing Sufficient School Places

4.1 In response to the increasing demand for school places the Council continues to work with its partners to develop additional places in targeted areas, utilising capital funding provided by the Government to the Council for this purpose (known as Basic Need capital funding), as well as through access to some additional sources of funding where possible and the development of free schools through the Government's free school scheme.

4.2 In recent years the Council has undertaken four successful free school presumptions which led to the establishment of three new secondary schools and one new primary. This means that the Council used capital funding to build the school and then coordinates the process to identify a multi academy trust to run the school which is then recommended to the DfE. The most recent being a new secondary school in Longsight Ward known as Co-op Academy Belle View which opened in September 2021 in temporary accommodation at Connell College. The school moved into in permanent building in January 2023. New schools established through the Free School Presumption route will be expected to work to local admission arrangements and contribute to the City's priorities for its children and young people.

5.0 Actions to Secure Sufficient School Places

Primary Phase

5.1 The continued attractiveness of the city centre as a place to live and work and ongoing residential growth is expected to result in additional demand for primary school places as more residents choose to remain in the area when starting a family.

5.2 In response to this forecast demand the Council is working with Renaker Build to establish a new primary school as part of the Crown Street phase 2 development. The school will provide 210 places for primary age children along with a 26-place nursery. It will be funded by S106 and basic need capital and is expected to open in 2024. A free school presumption has been completed with The Laurus Trust appointed as operator.

5.3 Olive Primary School which is a centrally funded free school - remains in the pipeline and is expected to open in 2024 at a site in the Cheetham area. The school will be part of the Star Academies Trust and offer a total of 420 places.

Secondary Phase

5.4 Historical growth of primary cohorts is continuing to drive increased demand for places at secondary schools along with new arrivals to the city. In response

to this demand the Council commissioned a significant programme of expansions and new schools funded from Basic Need capital and worked with the DfE to secure the delivery of centrally funded free schools.

School	Age Range	Delivery Route	Opened	Places
Dean Trust	11-16	MCC Free School	2015	1200
MEA Central	11-16	MCC Free School	2016	1050
Eden Boys Leadership Academy	11-18	DfE Free School	2017	600
Eden Girls Leadership Academy	11-18	DfE Free School	2017	600
CHS South	11-16	DfE Free School	2018	1200
Co-op Academy Manchester	11-16	MCC Expansion	2018	720
Didsbury High School	11-18	DfE Free School	2019	1050
Dean Trust	11-16	MCC Expansion	2020	150
Co-op Academy Belle Vue	11-16	MCC Free School	2021	1200
Our Lady's RC High School	11-16	MCC Expansion	2022	150

5.5 A further two pipeline secondary schools are planned to open and will be delivered by the DfE as part of the central free school programme. There has continued to be pressure on secondary school places in Wythenshawe following the DfE's decision to close Newall Green High School in 2021 and also in the north of the City. The City Council strongly opposed the closure of Newall Green High School and following representation to the DfE regarding the need for a 4th secondary school in Wythenshawe, it has been agreed by the DfE that Dixons Newall Green Academy will open in 2023 and is set to provide a total of 700 places at the former site of Newall Green High School in Baguley. For some time now the plan is for another approved free school provided by The Dean Trust to open in 2028 providing 1050 places at a site in Newton Heath. The Council and Your Housing Group are continuing to work together with the DfE to ensure that there is continued progress towards opening this school.

5.6 Work is ongoing to identify further opportunities for creating additional places in secondary schools in areas where there is significant in-year demand and large numbers of children transitioning from primary settings.

Special Schools

5.7 There are currently 14 Special schools established in the City organised across primary and secondary. In addition, 20 schools have resourced provision (RP) for between 7 and 15 children at each site in excess of their mainstream cohorts. Resourced provision is setup in dedicated environments within the school's accommodation.

5.8 Special schools and resourced provision in Manchester are operating at or close to capacity with few options remaining to create additional places in existing accommodation. Data shows that there is continuing demand which

correlates with growth in the City's population and mainstream pupil cohort as well as earlier identification of children who will require specialist provision. Meeting the needs of this vulnerable cohort will require that Specialist provision is organised effectively and efficiently across the City.

- 5.9 A significant number of council commissioned expansions have taken place to increase capacity within the specialist sector. In addition, the DfE have delivered one new primary special school in the north of the city. Details of capacity increases are noted in the following table.

School	Age Range	Delivery Route	Opened	Places
Prospect House	3-11	DfE Free School	2020	100
North Ridge High School	16-18	MCC Expansion	2021	36
Grange	4-19	MCC Expansion	2021	30
Camberwell Park	2-11	MCC Expansion	2021	80
Southern Cross (Roundwood site)	9-16	MCC Expansion	2021	67
Southern Cross (Castlefield site)	9-16	MCC Expansion	2021	50
The Barlow RC High School (Resourced Provision)	11-16	MCC Expansion	2022	16
The Birches	2-11	MCC Expansion	2022	8
Lancasterian	3-16	MCC Expansion	2022	26
Rodney House	4-11	MCC Expansion	2022	10
Gorton Primary (Resourced Provision)	3-11	MCC Expansion	2022	18
Melland High School	11-19	MCC Expansion	2023	64
Pioneer House	11-19	MCC Expansion	2024	40
William Hulme's Grammar School (Resourced Provision)	3-18	MCC Expansion	2024	30
Rushbrook Primary Academy (SEN Unit)	3-11	MCC Expansion	2024	40

- 5.10 In 2022 the DfE announced a new central free school round for local authorities to propose new special schools. Manchester submitted two proposals which were unsuccessful.

- 5.11 A new secondary special school built by the Council is about to start construction at a site in Miles Platting. The school will provide 150 places for pupils with an EHCP and is due to open in 2025. This new investment will be resourced from High Needs Capital and Basic Need grants. A free school presumption has been completed with a preferred academy sponsor having been communicated to the DfE. A decision will be made by the Department later in July as to whether the preferred sponsor will take the school forward to pre-opening phase.

- 5.12 Considering the ongoing high levels of demand for specialist provision across the City it is anticipated that further investment will be required to meet growth

in the cohort of children with an EHCP who require places in resourced provision, SEN Units, or special schools now and in the future. Continuing to provide more local specialist provision will enable the Council to meet need locally and reduce our costs on home to school travel and reduce revenue spending on independent specialist provision which is located outside of the City.

- 5.13 The Council continues to work with special schools, multi academy trusts, and mainstream schools to identify opportunities to increase the capacity of provision for pupils requiring specialist support. This will include the expansion of existing special schools and establishing resourced provision or SEN Units in mainstream settings. SEN Units will differ from resourced provision currently available within mainstream primary schools as they will meet a higher level of need within a mainstream setting and will enable children who would normally attend a special school to attend more local primary school to access this provision. This model is currently being explored and developed at Gorton Primary. Opportunities to increase specialist will be targeted at areas with the greatest demand to ensure provision is well located to meet community need and reduce travel distances of pupils.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Local Authority has very strong partnerships with all schools and Multi Academy Trusts that work in the City. Through this collaboration, a significant number of new school places have successfully been created as both expansions of existing schools and the development of new schools to meet demand across the City. Projections show that there continues to be a need for additional places particularly across the secondary school sector and recent pressures have been exacerbated by pressure on secondary places in neighbouring Local Authorities, in year new arrivals to Manchester and a growing child population in the City. The Local Authority will continue to work with the DFE, Multi Academy Trust and school leaders in the City to explore options for creating additional secondary school and specialist places to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet projected demand.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.