

TITLE	Primary Place Planning and Allocation Process
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny on 21 July 2015
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That Wokingham's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for children of statutory school age is discharged.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report is noted.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report focuses on the supply and allocation of Reception places in Earley schools for September 2015. It should be read together with the associated report "Review Draft Primary Strategy" to provide a full answer to the report brief, namely "to receive an initial report on pupil place planning and processes for the allocation of places across the Borough including Earley."

29 Earley children could not be allocated a preferred school and were allocated to primary school places outside the Earley area. There were two principal causes:

1. Demand for Reception places rose in 2015 compared to 2014 despite there being no increase in the number of children born in the three core Earley wards (Hawkedon, Maiden Erlegh and Hillside) in the year corresponding to the 2015 admission round. This is due to an increased rate of movement into the area by families with children.
2. Earley schools are popular across parts of the Reading BC area and all places were allocated with preference offers. However, not all Earley schools are as popular (as measured by expressed preferences) in the Earley area itself. Consequently a number of Earley schools admit Reading resident children as preferred schools and Earley resident children who could have been allocated these places, if their parents had expressed preferences for these schools, were offered non preferred (diverts) school places outside the Earley area. The number of offers to Reading resident children not living in the allocated schools' designated areas exceeded the number of children diverted outside the area.

We have a clear Primary strategy, the refresh of which identifies Earley as an area to consider for additional capacity.

Officers have maintained dialogue with concerned parents and local members. It is anticipated this will continue through the development of the primary strategy.

Background

The current position is that all 29 children requiring 2015 Reception places living in the Earley school designated areas who have been diverted, have been diverted to schools in adjoining planning areas. This is 7% of the local total (significantly above the Wokingham average (3% of all offers).

These children have been diverted to 6 schools – but predominantly to Winnersh (Winnersh Primary 9, Wheatfield Primary 5) and Woodley (St Dominic Savio 11) (other schools are Bearwood, Windmill and Sonning).

The average home to school distance (radial distance) to a diverted school is 1.9 miles (ranging from just over a mile to just over 3 miles)

Analysis of Issues

A shortfall in Reception places in the 7 Earley schools to meet 2015 demand is driven by

- The relative local popularity of some schools
- Strong cross border preference for Wokingham schools

52 places at 3 Earley schools are taken by Reading resident children and so are not available to offer as diverts to Earley resident families unable to secure a place at their local schools.

Evidence available to date indicates that demand for Year R places will rise next year – but (based on birth data) can be expected to fall sharply in subsequent years. That said, there is no clear pattern to the number of live births over the last decade. Other factors (e.g. a “wave” of older families moving out releasing family homes for younger families) may be significant factors – but there is little hard evidence to evaluate. The movement of older families (often young retirees) out of the borough has been a significant feature of the borough’s demography for some years – there is little evidence on local area rates of such movements.

School Place provision audit and testing the model of projections

Wokingham Borough Council Shared Audit service conducted a review on school place planning and school place projection model in the Spring and Summer of 2015.

Since November 2009 the council has identified the inability to match supply and demand for school places as a corporate risk and this is owned by the Director of Children's Services.

The audit took a risk-based approach in conducting their review and also focussed their testing and research on demographic forecasting.

Benchmarking the risk definition set out in the Corporate Risk Register against 18 other local authorities, audit identified only four that included a risk related to school place provision or demographic forecasting, highlighting the particular priority that Wokingham Borough Council places on the management of this risk.

Audit tested and validated the school projection models and data to establish the likelihood of a failure occurring at WBC. No significant data errors in the Primary School or Secondary School Projection Models were identified and audit reported that overall testing highlighted that the council presently has sufficient school places to meet pupil requirements. The report recognised that calculating accurate projections is a highly complex practice and importance of avoiding over provision of school places as well as under provision.

Recommendations from the audit report to enhance the projection model are being actioned including establishing a regular programme of variance analysis of available data to improve the level of accuracy and assist in producing future projections

Future Roll Growth

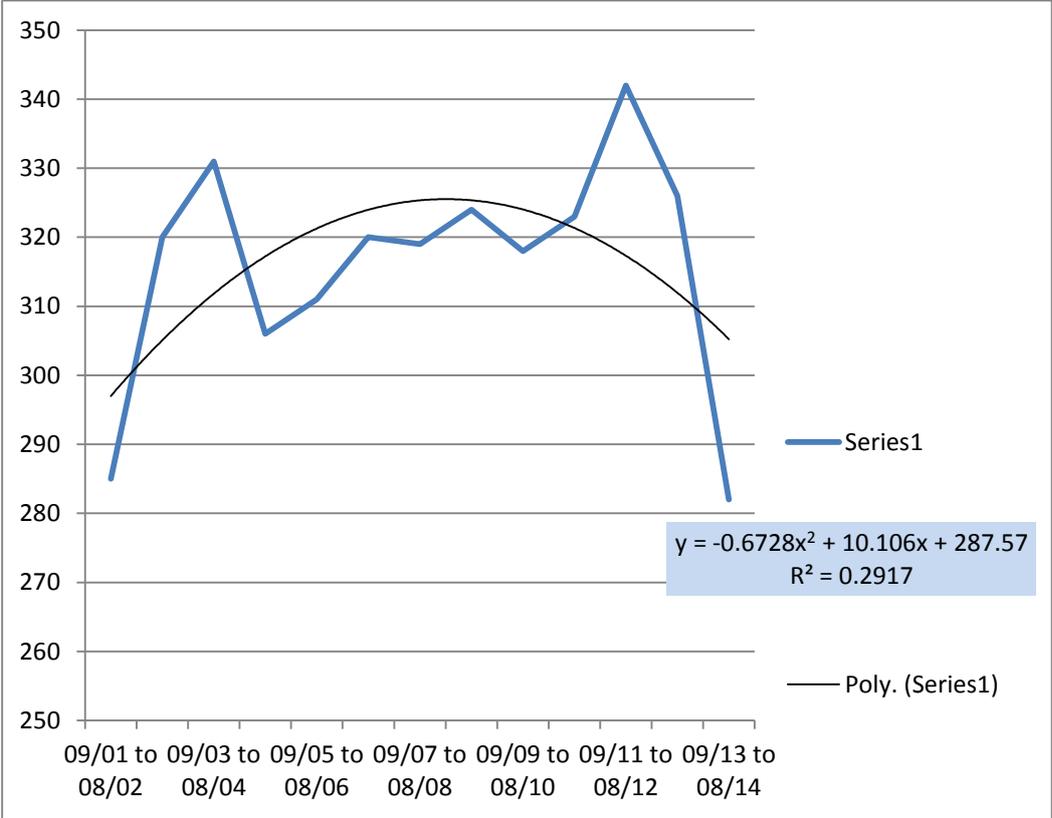
Academic year	KS1			KS2				Total
	Year R*	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
14/15	477	442	447	449	433	421	431	3,100
15/16	493	444	444	450	454	438	438	3,161
16/17	521	521	447	450	458	459	451	3,307
17/18	488	489	524	453	458	463	472	3,347
18/19	432	433	492	529	461	463	476	3,286
19/20	432	433	437	497	535	466	476	3,276
20/21	432	433	437	442	504	540	479	3,267
21/22	432	433	437	442	448	510	554	3,256

The current WBC roll projection spreadsheet indicates that the Year R roll will peak in 2016/17 and decline thereafter. This decline from the 2017/18 academic year is

consistent with local and national live birth data – indicating a sharp fall in that year in the number of children born. This fall is continued in Wokingham specific data for the subsequent cohort.

Birth Data

Year R projections are largely driven by births (movement into an area and cross border movement are both factors, but are in effect based on a historic percentage of the number of live births in WBC wards that have historically fed WBC schools). Even though migration into the borough of families with young children continues to be a significant factor, the majority of children requiring Reception places in future will have been born in the borough.



Graph showing the number of live births in the core Earley wards (Hawkedon, Hillfield and Maiden Erlegh) by academic year.

As can be seen there is no consistent pattern (of growth or decline) across the Earley wards (no Town Council specific analysis is available). That said a peak in births (on the right of the graph) represents the cohort who will enter school in September 2016 – indicating that the place shortfall seen this year will worsen next year unless remedial action is taken.

The number of births is significantly less than the actual and projected number of required Reception places (e.g. 323 born in 2010/11 compared to 382 Reception applicants for 2015/16 – a variance of 59 or 18%) indicating that movement into the area is a very significant factor.

Roll projection/ birth data conclusion

There is a case to create additional capacity in the Earley area, at least to meet short term need. However, the fall in the number of live births is expected to have a significant impact from 2017. These factors are considered further in the linked report on the primary place strategy.

Community and member dialogue

Officers have met a number of concerned local parents (those whose children have been diverted out of the area) in a series of evening meetings. Officers continue to explore options and discuss possible service improvements (e.g. to the place planning process and data) with these parents.

Earley options for capacity from 2016

Any changes to capacity will be agreed as a part of the revised primary strategy (in preparation, draft in the related report on this agenda). This is likely to mean from September 2016. The strategy will consider mid-phase (Years 1 to 6) as well as future Reception place needs, so there will be an opportunity to consider how best to meet the needs of this cohort (September 2015 Reception class) of Earley resident children through the primary review process.

Sites

There are a number of Earley school capacity expansion options under consideration as part of the primary review process. All have significant challenges as sites are constrained and additional home to school traffic difficult to adequately mitigate.

Admission arrangements

Revisions to school designated areas can be considered – but these are unlikely to be helpful while there are marked differences in local school popularity and as long as there is a general shortfall in capacity.

The next opportunity to change admissions arrangements is for September 2017 admissions.

Better information to parents may also be helpful – to support parents in obtaining a local school place by explaining the importance of using all four preferences and how to interpret historic admissions data to use their preferences effectively.

The admissions team is working closely with other council departments to consider whether or not any offers are based on misleading or fraudulent information (particularly concerning home address). Where such cases are identified offers can be withdrawn (even once a child has started school).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent

reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The financial appraisal of the primary provision strategy is ongoing.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

N/A

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

N/A

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