



## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY**

### **1.0 School Place Planning Duties**

Under the Education Act 1996 the Council has a general duty to secure sufficient schools in its area.

In Halton school places are commissioned from our existing schools. Any new school provision would need to be an academy or free school, approved by the Secretary of State.

This document sets out the factors that the Local Authority takes into account when fulfilling its role in ensuring there are sufficient school places within the borough.

This School Place Planning Strategy is aligned to Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which has Halton's Children and Young People, together with Employment, Learning and Skills as two of its priority themes. This Strategy is also aligned to the current Halton's Children, Young People and Families Plan, and to the School Transport Policy.

### **2.0 School Place Planning**

To assist in the school place planning process, the Council uses a range of data and information to inform on its place planning at both the primary and secondary levels of education.

To plan for primary provision the Council takes into account the following factors:

- live birth data,
- data regarding children accessing early years provision at ages 2, 3 and 4,
- historical data with regard to pupil migration i.e. import/export where pupils either travel into the borough for educational provision, or travel out of the borough to access educational provision
- house build/demolition information to account for any new build or demolition that may affect pupil numbers and associated provision (known as pupil yield)
- January, May and October Census data across all year groups to determine estimates against places
- Reception intake numbers against annually reviewed school capacity data

To plan for secondary provision the Council takes into account the following factors:

- Pupil numbers in existing primary schools (providing a 7 year forecast position)
- historical data with regard to pupil migration i.e. import/export at the primary to secondary transfer stage where pupils either travel into the borough for educational provision, or travel out of the borough to access educational provision

- house build/demolition information to account for any new build or demolition that may affect pupil numbers and associated provision (known as pupil yield)
- January, May and October Census data to determine estimates against places
- Year 7 intake numbers against annually reviewed school capacity data

### 3.0 Current Provision

In Halton there are 49 primary schools, 7 secondary schools, 1 all-through school and 4 special schools. The categories of school are:

Category	Primary	Secondary	All Through (Academy)	Special	Total
Community/Voluntary Controlled	27	0	0	2	29
Voluntary Aided	15	2	0	0	17
Academy	7	4	1	2	14
Free School	0	1	0	0	1
Independent	0	0	0	0	0
Foundation	0	0	0	0	0
Total	49	7	1	4	61

### 3.1 Primary School Provision

At the time of writing (summer 2019) there are 11,718 primary school places across the borough with 10,723 occupancy, overall primary provision in Halton is operating at 91.5% capacity with 995 surplus places.

### 3.2 Secondary School Provision

At the time of writing (summer 2019) there are 8,550 secondary school places across the borough with 7,428 occupancy, overall secondary provision in Halton is operating at 87% capacity with 1,122 surplus places.

### 4.0 Birth Rates

The Local Authority reviews birth rate data within its area using annual data provided by the Office for National Statistics. Annual data set information is provided here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsummarytables>

In summary the Office for National Statistics provides for an 8.6% decrease in Halton's age 0-15 forecast 2018 to 2038, which indicates no additional school place demand due to the birth rate.

Whilst live birth rates are a factor in pupil place planning, a clearer picture of actual school admission numbers develops as children begin to take up their 2, 3 and 4 year old early years entitlement.

### 5.0 Pupil Migration

As referred to within the place planning methodology/factors, pupil migration is taken into account in terms of pupils coming in to Halton's schools from out of borough to access educational provision, or pupils living in Halton but choosing to access schools in neighbouring authorities. This is known as pupil import/export.

The table below provides the pupil import/export figures for the period 2014 to 2019 and evidences that, overall on average, whilst there is surplus capacity within both the primary and secondary sectors in Halton, Halton is a net exporter at both primary and secondary level.

Secondary Intake						
Intake	Total Apps	Exported	% Exported	Imported	% Imported	NET Export/Import
2014	1450	63	4.3%	51	3.5%	-0.8%
2015	1583	58	3.7%	59	3.7%	0.1%
2016	1673	91	5.4%	82	4.9%	-0.5%
2017	1738	61	3.5%	63	3.6%	0.1%
2018	1631	73	4.5%	49	3.0%	-1.5%
2019	1736	73	4.2%	35	2.0%	-2.2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>1635</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>

  

Primary Intake						
Intake	Total Apps	Exported	% Exported	Imported	% Imported	NET Export/Import
2014	1673	94	5.6%	18	1.1%	-4.5%
2015	1601	86	5.4%	33	2.1%	-3.3%
2016	1633	84	5.1%	24	1.5%	-3.7%
2017	1659	98	5.9%	14	0.8%	-5.1%
2018	1553	87	5.6%	20	1.3%	-4.3%
2019	1620	76	4.7%	15	0.9%	-3.8%
<b>Average</b>	<b>1623</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>-4.1%</b>

## 6.0 School Place Planning Areas

To assist in the planning process Halton has determined 4 primary and 2 secondary planning areas. These are:

<i>Primary Planning Areas:</i>
Runcorn East
Runcorn West
Widnes East
Widnes West
<i>Secondary Planning Areas:</i>
Runcorn
Widnes

Whilst the planning areas above have been defined to aid the local school place planning process, the Department for Education clearly identify Halton as one borough, with 7 secondary schools, 49 primary schools, and 1 all-through school, and the Department for Education bases the Council's requirement to meet its sufficiency duty on overall primary and secondary provision within the borough, and not upon specific planning or geographical areas. As the borough is relatively small and compact, primary and secondary school provision is easily accessible via walk ways, cycle routes, bus routes, and an easily accessible road network.

## **7.0 Addressing surplus capacity/additional need**

Each school has a Net Capacity and this is a calculation which identifies the number of children that can reasonably be accommodated within each school and is principally based upon floor space and teaching areas within each school. A Net Capacity Assessment will result in a minimum and maximum number of pupils that a school could accommodate and provides a guide for the admission authority for each school (the Council for community and voluntary controlled schools, and the Governing Board/Trust for voluntary aided, academy and free schools) as to how many pupils can be admitted to each year group. This number is known as a school's Published Admission Number (PAN).

The Council reviews capacity on an annual basis to ensure there is sufficient capacity across primary and secondary provision. Where it is identified that there is surplus capacity, then no action is required, but the admission authority for the school must ensure they are making best use of their building and not incurring unnecessary expenditure in terms of running costs.

Where additional need is identified going forward, the Council together with schools will look at the scope to increase existing provision to seek to maximise parental preference. This is usually undertaken through either an increase in a school's Published Admission Number with no additional capital resource requirements, or an increase in the school's Published Admission Number with additional capital resource requirements (likely to be funded through Basic Need), if required.

When looking at additional school place need, the Council as commissioner of school places, will also look to the wider geographical area to determine whether there is existing accessible school provision within a reasonable distance. For children aged under 8 this would be under 2 miles and for children aged over 8 this would be 3 miles. In some cases it may be determined that, as there are places available within a wider geographical area, school place sufficiency will be managed by the provision of transport to those schools with capacity, with the Council providing assistance with transport if needed and the child meets the eligibility criteria.

## **8.0 Housing**

The Council has a duty to publish its Local Plan. Included within the Local Plan are any proposals for house build and demolition. To determine the impact of existing and new housing development proposals on Halton's school provision, and to identify whether there may be any increase in demand for school provision, the number of pupils arising from any additional house build is regularly reviewed. This will include consideration of location, size of house (number of bedrooms), and type of housing (social or private market). Whilst there has been considerable house-build across the borough in the last 10 years, in both Runcorn and Widnes, this has not resulted in the requirement for any additional school places via the provision of a new school. Minor adaptations have been made to existing schools. Regular reviews through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment on new builds are monitored across the authority area.

## **9.0 Determining Admission Arrangements and meeting the sufficiency duty**

Each year a report is taken to the Council's Executive Board which sets out how the Council will allocate places to its community and voluntary controlled schools, determines the criteria for admission, and sets out its coordinated admissions schemes for admission to all primary and secondary schools within the borough. The Governing Boards for each voluntary aided, academy and free school are also required to keep their arrangements under review and determine their own admission arrangements in accordance with the Department for Education School Admissions Code. The timescale of the report to the Council's Executive Board ensures that if it is determined that additional places may be

required within the primary or secondary sector, there is sufficient lead-in time to address those issues. Included within the report to the Executive Board are details of the proposed Published Admission Number for each school, providing overall capacity for new admissions into Reception at Primary level, and Year 7 at Secondary level, which demonstrates the Council is aware of overall capacity within its school stock, and is fulfilling its duty to secure sufficient school places in its area.

#### **10.0 Future Provision**

Taking into account a generally declining birth rate, proposed house build, and current school place provision, which confirms that Halton is currently operating at 8.5% surplus capacity across the primary sector (circa 995 spare places), and 13% surplus capacity across the secondary sector (circa 1,122 spare places), and projecting current pupil numbers through the sectors, there is no indication of a requirement for any new school provision within either the primary or secondary sectors.

All Local Authorities report on an annual basis to the Department for Education on school capacity, and have the opportunity to raise any school place planning issues they may have. The Council continues to regularly monitor and review the information it has at its disposal to ensure that it fulfils its sufficiency duty with regard to school places.