

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

13 April 2016

Report title Wolverhampton Secondary School
Sufficiency Strategy - capacity, curriculum
and sector considerations

Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Cllr Claire Darke Education
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Julien Kramer (Education)
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Report to be/has been considered

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. To note the rising secondary demographic within the City and the duty of the Council to ensure a sufficient supply of secondary school places.
2. To scrutinise and comment upon the steps currently being taken to define our secondary strategy, ensure the supply of secondary places, appropriate curriculum development and other sector requirements.
3. To scrutinise and comment upon a related draft Secondary Sufficiency Strategy (**Annex A**).
4. To note the need to identify a potential contingency site(s) for further secondary school/ educational development should this be required.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's strategy to inform the development of secondary teaching and learning provision across the City for the next decade.
- 1.2 Scrutiny is briefed upon the underlying secondary demographic changes, key strategic objectives, associated challenges and the steps being taken by the Education Service and its strategic partners to identify and address these.
- 1.3 Of necessity current development work is currently focused upon ensuring sufficiency of supply. This is however being complemented by closer partnership working with schools and other post 16 providers to ensure that the needs of our learners and those of the City as a whole are being met.
- 1.4 Scrutiny is briefed upon the key principles informing current thinking, activity being undertaken and is invited to comment upon these.

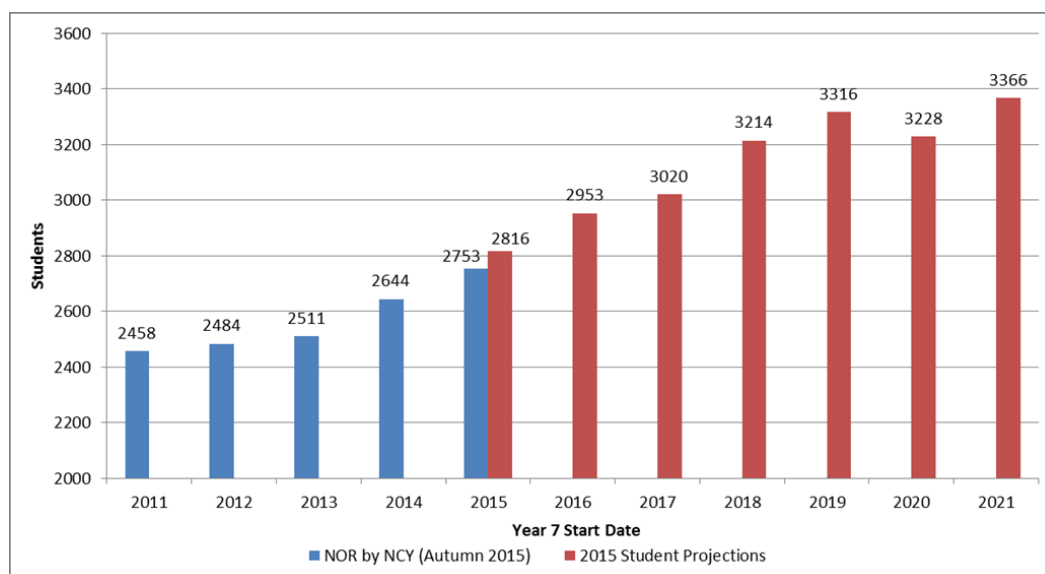
2.0 Report

- 2.1 **Duty to secure supply of sufficient places:** The Council currently has a statutory duty to secure a sufficient supply of school places. It does not however have to supply these places itself and there are a range of possible promoters who might wish to increase their existing secondary capacities or indeed establish new provision.
- 2.2 **Building Schools for the Future (BSF) planning assumptions:** Although the programme delivered exciting secondary and special school learning environments the recent BSF programme did not significantly change the distribution of provision and largely replicated existing capacity anticipated at 2007 as part of the Strategy for Change. Since then there has been a national demographic surge at primary level that will inevitably present in larger secondary cohorts.
- 2.3 **Demographic Projections:** The 2015/16 secondary position is set out in the table below.

Secondary NCY (2015/16)	Places	Number on Roll (Autumn 2015)	Surplus Places	Surplus %
Year 7	3,045	2,753	292	9.6
Year 8	2,881	2,644	247	8.6
Year 9	2,903	2,511	399	13.7
Year 10	3,043	2,484	565	18.6
Year 11	2,893	2,458	448	15.5

2.4 From the above figures it is projected that there will be a 20% growth in Year 7 cohorts between 2015/16 and 2021/22.

2.5 **Projected Year 7 Cohorts** are shown in the chart below.



2.6 Year 7 demand is currently predicted to exceed current levels of supply in 2018/19.

2.7 City wide analysis of data suggests that there is however a need to introduce additional capacity during 2016/17 for September 2017 in order to offer an appropriate level of surplus and to plan to meet longer term cohort growth.

2.8 **Projected secondary growth requirements**

Current analysis of secondary requirements suggest that there is a need to secure an annual Year 7 PAN increase as follows to achieve a 6% surplus (and enable an appropriate level of parental choice) across the City:

- 2017/18: 140 additional Year 7 places (700 additional places across Y7 – Y11)
- 2018/19: 210 additional Year 7 places (1050 additional places across Y7 – Y11)
- 2019/20: 105 additional Year 7 places (525 additional places across Y7 – Y11)
- 2020/21: No additional Year 7 places
- 2021/22: 60 additional Year 7 places. (300 additional places across Y7 – Y11)

2.9 It is also anticipated that there will be a further requirement in 2022/23 to create in the region of 300 additional Year 7 places.

2.10 Whilst the Council will naturally seek to secure provision at lowest cost from within the existing estate the above theoretically equates to additional provision in the City and it may yet prove necessary for the Council to consider this option in partnership with a suitable sponsor.

2.11 **Other factors** – Planning to accommodate rising numbers is challenging given the interplay of a range of disparate factors:

- Nature of estate governance – the majority of secondary schools are academies and are therefore their own admission authority
- Curriculum offer varies significantly with various specialisms
- Accommodating a rising SEND population.
- School performance is also varied
- The Council is not in control of some factors e.g. delays experienced in the conversion of the Royal school – Academy trusts control the majority of the secondary school estate.
- Site and planning constraints.
- A need for provision to complement broader regeneration and housing development plans.

All of the above are impacted by parental preference – the key determinant in school place allocation.

- 2.12 In addition to the above the Council must also overcome potential obstacles to change such as the fact that four of the schools concerned are subject to Public Finance Initiatives which make any subsequent remodeling very difficult.
- 2.13 There is also a need to successfully interpret and respond to cross border movements. The Council has recently seen an increasing proportion of children from neighbouring authorities electing to seek a secondary place within the City. This is likely to increase given current proposals by Dudley Council to close The Coseley School (secondary provision adjacent to the south of Wolverhampton).
- 2.14 In view of the geographical supply pressures that are likely to present in the south of the City and the need to accommodate an influx of pupils back to Wolverhampton it is likely that the Council will need to identify a potential contingency site(s) to accommodate future growth.

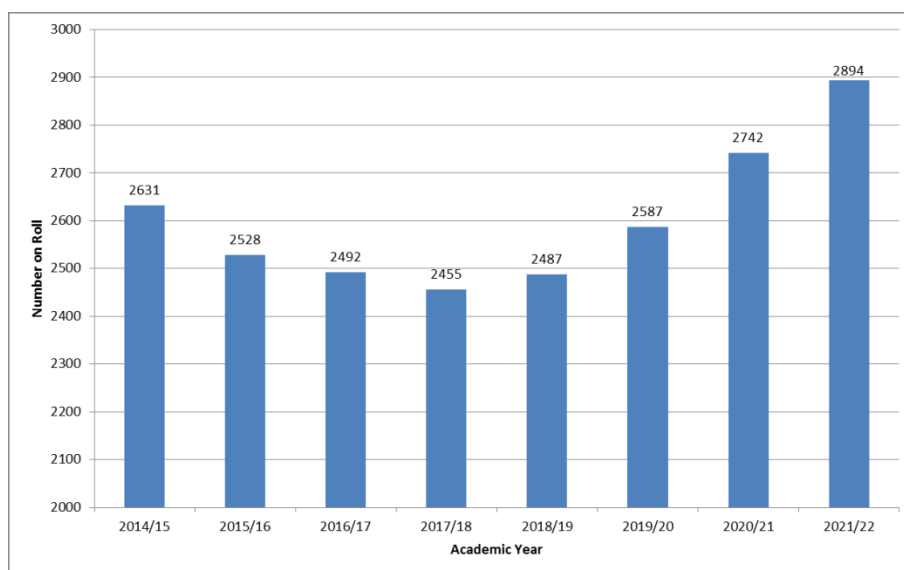
2.15 Development of Secondary Sufficiency Strategy 2016-18

- 2.15.1 In view of the factors identified above secondary Headteachers have already been briefed upon the above challenges and invited to comment upon a number of key draft strategic planning principles designed to secure sufficiency of secondary supply in recent well attended workshops. Work will continue in refining and developing these and these inform the Secondary Sufficiency Strategy 2016 -18 (**Annex A**).
- 2.15.2 The Draft Secondary Sufficiency Strategy 2016-18 will be subject to consultation with key partners during the summer term 2016. Consultees will include; Headteachers and Principals of secondary providers in the City, Academy Trusts and Chairs of Governors of local secondary schools, all Ward Councillors, Trade Union Representatives and Diocesan Authorities.

2.16 Post 16 demographic considerations

- 2.16.1 Given the above secondary pressures there is also a need to consider how this will impact on the post 16 landscape and the capacity of the City to respond to the City Council's skills agenda.

2.16.2 Post 16 cohort projections are shown in the table below.



2.17 In summary from the above there is a projected increase in post 16 demographic from 2018/19 and an anticipated growth of 18% between 2017/18 and 2021/22.

2.18 The need for both short term and long term planning

It is clear from the above that there is a need to undertake both short term and longer term planning to ensure a sufficient supply of secondary and post 16 places.

2.19 Given the largely autonomous nature of the secondary and post 16 estate there is a need to engage stakeholders in extended dialogue whilst at the same time undertaking further detailed analysis at a local level to ensure a full understanding of the challenges and options open to the Council. This work is currently being undertaken and recent workshops with Headteachers have identified a number of potential planning principles and priorities that will inform planning.

2.20 Actions being taken to identify future secondary estate options

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the secondary estate and the opportunities that present the Education Department has tendered for external consultants to undertake a thorough needs analysis encompassing:

- Localised analysis of demand.
- Local issues impacting on curriculum delivery.
- Changing population needs and the identification of appropriate support mechanisms.

2.21 Securing the continuing engagement of stakeholders

Having regard to the Draft Secondary Sufficiency Strategy (**Annex A**) external consultants will also be working with education stakeholders (officers/ maintained/

Academy/ UTC/ potential new Sponsors) and will make practical recommendations for strategic change that are supported by partners and capable of being implemented to meet need within the necessary timescales.

- 2.22 In a separate programme of activity every school head teacher/ principal has also been visited and invited to share their aspirations and vision for their future estate and the role they envisage their establishment could play in developing a more coherent and collaborative learning estate across the City.
- 2.23 The Education Service is also engaged with Connect Ed – a local schools’ company whose membership comprises the majority of City schools. Connect Ed provides a framework for school to school support as well as a bespoke service to recruit and train new teachers.
- 2.24 As a Board member of the Company, the Director of Education will ensure that broader objectives and considerations within this report inform local developments and that local solutions to our challenges are actively encouraged and developed.
- 2.25 The above will help develop shared practicable longer term options and resources strategies to meet strategic duties, stakeholder aspirations and learner and parent preferences. There will however also be a need to respond to national developments particularly in the area of continued academisation and post 16 provision.
- 2.26 In order to ensure on-going transparency and an open dialogue with school representatives a Secondary School Organisation Group is planned to be established during the summer term 2016. This group will monitor progress in securing sufficient secondary school places and will include a nominated Headteacher representative(s).
- 2.27 Emergent Post 16 Curriculum Developments - The Black Country Area Based Review**

The government is leading a restructure of the post-16 education and training sector through a series of area based reviews. This explicitly seeks to create more financially stable and efficient providers and secure improved collaboration across the different types of institution. The main focus is Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges although the review will also encompass school based provision. The Black Country Area Based Review is planned to take place in April 2016.

- 2.28 As set out above there is an on- going programme of workshops with secondary school representatives to develop a shared understanding, secure engagement and active participation in the planning process to ensure delivery against education and skills priorities for the City. The first two workshops have been very well attended with the majority of secondary schools being represented and fully engaged. These workshops have identified a number of key post planning principles that will inform workflow priorities and planning.
- 2.29 Discussions with the University of Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton College are also underway to explore developing and promoting new opportunities for

collaboration with a particular focus on pre – apprenticeship, apprenticeship and higher apprenticeship programmes.

- 2.30 The University and College continue to explore new teaching and learning opportunities for Wolverhampton learners and to promote further and higher education as aspirational progression routes.

2.31 The role of the Educational School Standards Improvement Service

The Educational School Standards Improvement Service will continue to:

- Provide targeted and differentiated levels of challenge and support for coasting secondary schools; schools below floor targets and those schools deemed to be vulnerable at inspection – as detailed in the School Improvement and Governance Strategy 2016.
- Work strategically with existing School Improvement Partnerships/ Teaching School Alliances to promote school to school support.
- Work with the early Help and Safeguarding teams to maintain focus on improving attendance and reducing absence as a priority to support raising standards, narrow the attainment gap and to ensure the safeguarding of all children.

2.32 Summary of current Strategic Planning Principles

Strategic planning for future provision across the city will be informed by the Draft Secondary Sufficiency Strategy (Annex A). In order to ensure that post 16 needs are adequately identified and met the Council has engaged an external consultant to undertake a detailed review of post 16 provision to identify strategic options for the City. As outlined above broad agreement has already been reached with school partners around key planning principles and this will inform workflow priorities and planning.

- 2.33 The Education Service will ensure that all strategic developments are joined up and that colleagues in the People and Place Directorates are also fully engaged in consultation and future planning. Throughout this work the Education Service will also be alert to the implications and impact of new legislation stemming from the White paper, Educational Excellence Everywhere.

- 2.34 Scrutiny is invited to comment upon **Annex A**.

2.35 The importance of meeting timelines

Given the scale of the above projected demand and the need to introduce additional capacity with effect from academic year 2017/18 it is imperative that work is undertaken in a timely manner.

2.36 Capital and governance implications

Funding for new provision is traditionally through basic need grant application and there is inevitably a delay in processing this by central government. Equally

authorities across England are facing similar challenges and it is unlikely that this would be funded in full in a timely manner.

The Council may therefore also need to give consideration to prudential borrowing and also the establishment of new provision in partnership with suitable sponsor(s) given the absence of capital funding and the restrictions placed upon local authorities in establishing new schools (all new schools must be academies/Free Schools).

3.0 Financial implications

- 3.1 The Council has previously agreed to fund the Primary Expansion Programme through prudential borrowing in advance of receipt of Basic Need Grant from the DfE. The allocation for 2017/18 of £4.2 million is not yet committed on specific schemes and is part of the calculation for repayment of the previous borrowing. It would be available for use on secondary expansion if that were considered a greater priority. The Authority has recently been notified of its 2018/19 Basic Need Allocation which will be £361,932. Further representations are being made to DfE as this level of funding is likely to be insufficient to meet the future capital requirements. There are a range of options around the provision of future capacity and a full appraisal will be required as part of future reports.
- 3.2 External support is being procured to assist in reviewing the existing estate and identification of options. Approval for funding from a corporate reserve will need to be considered given existing pressures on the Education budget.
- 3.3 As part of the Primary Expansion Programme the Schools Forum agreed to centrally retain an element of the Dedicated Schools Grant to create a Growth Fund to support the short term teaching and learning pressures generated by expanding schools. It is likely that the Schools Forum's consent will be required to the extension of Growth Fund provisions to the secondary sector which would cause further pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant which will be subject to a per pupil cash freeze over the lifetime of the current Parliament. The recent consultation proposals from DfE on the introduction of a national funding formula will also impact on the nature and level of future support to secondary schools. It is also anticipated that there will also be additional pressures upon Council services such as School Admissions and Democratic Support (Appeals) as teams process a rising number of applications within a fixed or declining resource base.
[MF/31032016/V]

4.0 Legal implications

- 4.1 Under Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 the Council has a duty to contribute to the development of the community by securing efficient primary and secondary education in the city. The Education Act 1996 also requires such functions to be carried out with a view to promoting high standards.
- 4.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places available. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities

to promote choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of new school places.

- 4.3 Proposals to alter the structure of schools need to comply with the provisions in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. As such, any specific proposals will require individual legal advice based on any specific proposal. Any alterations would need to comply with the Council's Constitution and all relevant legislation.
[TS/20012016/S]

5.0 Equalities implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate equalities implications arising from this report.

6.0 Environmental implications

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this Report

7.0 Human resources implications

- 7.1 There are no HR implications arising from this Report.

8.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 8.1 This report recommends the need to identify a potential contingency site for further school development. This matter will require consideration by the Corporate Landlord Board.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

- 9.1 Cabinet (12 November 2014) – Final Decision Regarding the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme.

1. Executive Summary

The main challenge that the City of Wolverhampton faces in relation to the organisation of secondary school provision is ensuring that sufficient high quality school places are available to meet the needs of local communities across the City. The recently witnessed increase in demand for primary provision in the City, will impact significantly on the City secondary estate in the short to medium term and additional capacity will be required to cater for the demographic uplift. This Strategy outlines anticipated levels of future demand and key policy decisions adopted by the Council to guide the ongoing development of the City's secondary school estate.

2. Introduction

Background

This strategy provides an outline of the City of Wolverhampton Council's secondary school organisation policy and offers a framework to guide the future development of the secondary school estate in the City.

Underpinning the Council's Corporate Plan, Wolverhampton's Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015-2025 and the Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy this document details the basic need challenge facing the City and outlines the approach adopted by the Council to meet this challenge.

The Secondary Sufficiency Strategy, aligned with the Council's School Improvement and Governance Strategy, seeks to secure sufficient high quality school places to improve educational outcomes across the City. The two strategies recognise the Council's role in ensuring an appropriate number of school places and in influencing the quality of education provided regardless of how schools are organised or governed.

The principles that have directed the development of this strategy are:

- Improving educational outcomes to support the longer term development and prosperity of the city
- Promoting choice and diversity of provision
- The need to effectively meet the needs of local communities
- A recognition of the importance of effective partnership working
- The need to ensure resources are used efficiently.

Context

Key Responsibilities:

Councils are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area, promote diversity and increase parental choice.

In 2015, Central Government raised the age of participation to 18. Local Authorities are required to develop a local strategy against the following criteria:

- To work with schools, colleges, training providers and employers to ensure a sufficient local curriculum offer.
- To provide careers advice from year 8 to year 13 – minimal statutory role focussing on supporting vulnerable learners.
- To track and record young people’s progression from education and training.
- To identify numbers of NEET (young people not in education, employment or training) or “unknowns” on local Client Caseload Information Systems.
- To provide additional support for young people with special needs (age 25); those in care; young offenders; young parents or those with specific support needs including mental health and substance misuse.

The Department for Education monitors progress against the aforementioned criteria and evaluates performance against national targets.

Autonomous School System

Central Government policy initiatives, including the establishment of Free Schools and University Technical Colleges coupled with the conversion of schools to academy status, have recently changed the landscape in which education and the Council’s statutory responsibilities are delivered. As illustrated in Figure 1, in February 2016 there was a diverse range of secondary provision in Wolverhampton.

Figure 1: Mainstream Secondary Establishments (February 2016)

Establishment Type	Count
Academy - Secondary	12
Community - Secondary	4
Free School - Secondary	1
University Technical College	1
Voluntary Aided - Secondary	1
Total	19

Appendix A illustrates the location of each secondary establishment in the City in February 2016. Please note that both The British Sikh School and the West Midlands Construction UTC are expected to relocate to new permanent sites during the 2016/17 academic year.

The diversity of the school estate in Wolverhampton is expected to be further enhanced in September 2016 when an independent school in the City (The Royal School Wolverhampton) converts to Free School status and expands. Subject to approval from the Secretary of State, this would introduce the City’s first All-through Free School.

Legislation dictates that, when considering the establishment of a new school, Free School/Academy proposals should be considered in the first instance and that Academy

Trusts can apply directly to the Secretary of State to make significant changes to individual establishments.

The Council is not in full control of all factors relating to the effective and timely supply of school places and as a consequence, successful partnership working is of paramount importance in order to ensure that the needs of the City's communities can continue to be met effectively.

The Council recognises the value of sustaining an effective partnership with all schools regardless of their status or governance arrangements. In order to support the Council with its duty to ensure the supply of sufficient school places within an increasingly autonomous school system, the Council have established a strong working partnership with Free Schools, Academies, Trusts, the Department for Education, the Education Funding Agency, the Regional Schools Commissioner for the West Midlands, neighbouring local authorities private sector partners and local Diocesan Authorities.

The relationship between the Council and Academies/Free Schools in the City is governed by the Council's 'Academy Protocol'. This Protocol provides a framework to promote cooperation and partnership working between the City of Wolverhampton Council and all Academies and Free Schools operating across the City. The Protocol sets out a shared ambition for our children to realise their full potential and our commitment to work together and share best practice to secure this. The Protocol sets out respective roles and responsibilities in terms of safeguarding and the continuous improvement in the educational outcomes of Wolverhampton's children and young people.

Opportunities to expand on the number of Free Schools in the City will be explored in order to meet basic need; however introducing additional Free School provision in geographically appropriate locations and in a timely manner presents a significant challenge. In order to ensure that the needs of families and students in Wolverhampton can continue to be met effectively it may, on occasion, be necessary for the Council to adopt a more responsive approach to school place planning and to develop contingency plans to cater for external influences on the supply of school places.

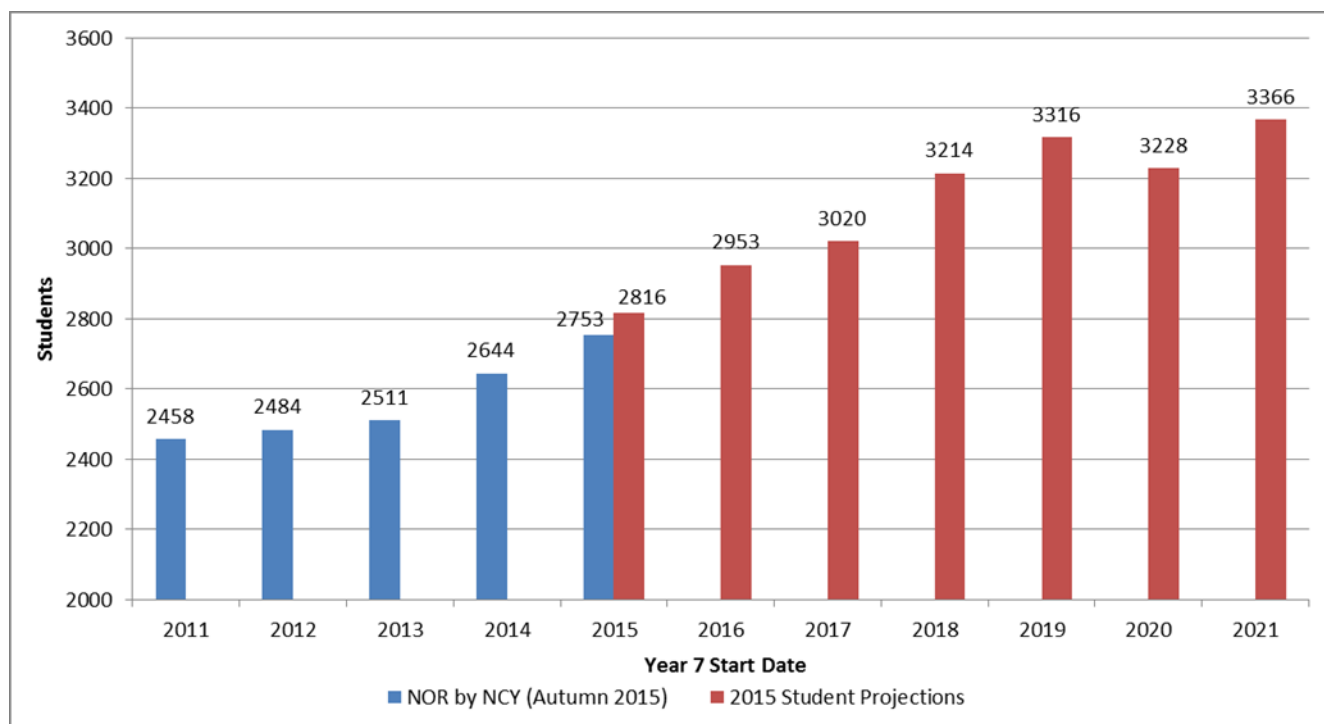
Demand

Levels of demand for secondary school provision in Wolverhampton are expected to increase significantly in the future as the bulge in pupil numbers in the City's primary schools moves through to the secondary estate. The City faces a considerable challenge to ensure that sufficient high quality school places are available to meet the needs of local communities moving forward. This upsurge in demand has primarily been driven by a marked increase in the number of births to Wolverhampton residents in recent years; a 24% increase between 2002 and 2014 (Office for National Statistics).

It should be noted that recent primary school expansion schemes have been funded through a combination of both central capital funding and constrained Council resources and that there remains uncertainty in respect of future central government capital funding allocations to meet basic need in the medium term.

As illustrated in Figure 2, levels of demand for secondary school provision in the City have increased significantly in recent years. In autumn 2015, the citywide Year 7 cohort in mainstream secondary provision (2,753) was 12% greater in size than the Year 11 cohort (2,458). The recently observed growth in the size of younger secondary cohorts is expected to accelerate in the short to medium term and projections suggest that between 2015/16 and 2021/22 Year 7 cohorts are likely to grow by 20%.

Figure 2: Numbers on Roll by National Curriculum Year and Projected Citywide Year 7 Cohorts



As evident in Wolverhampton’s primary school estate, the City has recently experienced an acceleration in the in-year growth of some existing secondary cohorts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this growth is also being experienced by neighbouring local authorities and is likely to be the consequence of migration rates. Council representatives are closely monitoring fluctuations in the size of existing cohorts to ensure that incoming students can access educational provision within a reasonable distance of their home address.

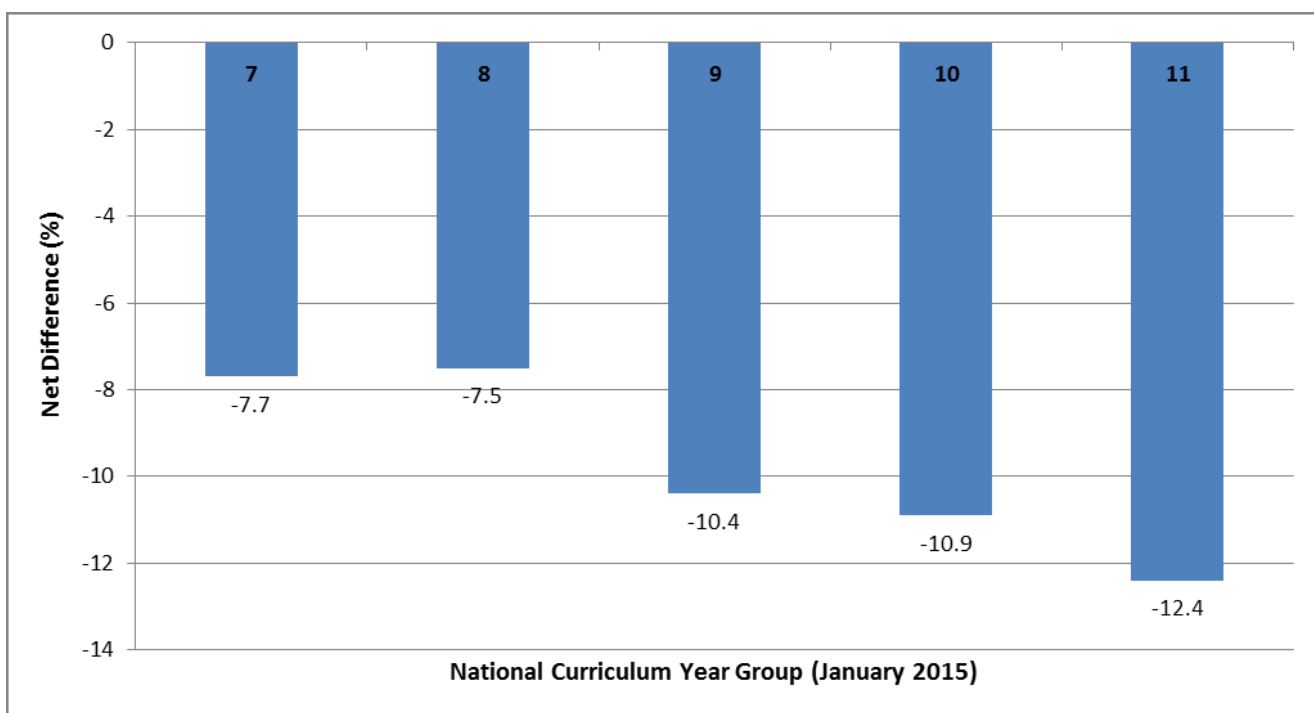
One of the key factors that influences demand for secondary school places in the City is the cross border movement of students. In January 2015, 1,116 secondary students who reside outside of Wolverhampton attended schools within the City (imports) and 2,501 secondary students who live in Wolverhampton attended schools outside of the City (exports). As illustrated in Figure 3, in January 2015 Wolverhampton was a net exporter of students in Years 7 to 11.

It should be noted that the scale of net loss has changed significantly in recent years; in January 2015 the net difference between imports and exports as a percentage of the school population in Year 7 was -7.7% compared with -12.4% in Year 11.

This change has been driven by both an increasing proportion of students residing outside of Wolverhampton attending a school in the City and a reduction in the proportion of students residing in Wolverhampton attending provision outside of the City.

Should this trend continue and the net difference reduce further, levels of future demand would be impacted upon and additional capacity would be required to meet demand. If Wolverhampton had experienced a zero net difference between imports and exports in January 2015, an additional 1,385 students would have been attending secondary schools in the City.

Figure 3: Net Difference between Imports and Exports as a Percentage of the School Population



3. Secondary School Organisation

This section details the key recommendations employed by the City of Wolverhampton Council to guide the organisation of the secondary estate:

School Size

In order to ensure the efficient use of resources and to support the longer term viability of individual establishments, it is recommended that secondary schools in the City offer a minimum of 150 places per year group (Year 7 to 11).

Larger secondary schools can potentially offer: an increased opportunity to respond effectively to change, greater flexibility to cover staff absence, increased opportunity to provide leadership succession opportunities and increased opportunity to use resources more efficiently. This strategy supports the development of larger secondary schools, where appropriate.

Surplus Place Position

Surplus places are school places that have not been filled.

This strategy recommends that a minimum level of surplus within each year group of 6% (against admission limits) is available at a citywide level.

A level of surplus is essential in order to offer increased opportunity for parental preference to be reflected in allocations, to allow for fluctuations in demand and to offer flexibility to cater for mid-year entrants. Too few surplus places can result in reduced opportunity for parental choice, increased travel times, and increased class sizes. However, too great a number of surplus places can lead to the inefficient use of resources.

It should be noted that given the significant variations in both localised demand and the popularity of individual establishments, balancing levels of surplus across all schools is a significant challenge; adopting a planned, strategic approach to school place planning maximises opportunities to meet localised demand for school places and for individual establishments' positions to be considered.

To ensure that students can access a local school and that travel times are reasonable this Strategy recommends that, where required, a secondary school place is available within a maximum of three miles (walking distance) of each secondary school students' home. An annual dialogue will be established between representatives of Education and Transportation to review school access routes and citywide transportation requirements.

The Introduction of Additional School Places

In order to safeguard the sustainability of the school estate, the expansion of existing schools will be investigated in the first instance, prior to considering the introduction of new provision.

In order to achieve this ambition, the Council will seek to maximise the capacity of existing school sites and consider the appropriation of suitable land adjacent to existing school sites.

The following factors will be considered when prioritising potential school expansion schemes:

- Parental Choice – schools which are most popular with parents
- School Performance - schools judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted
- Attainment - schools whose results consistently exceed floor standards
- School Leadership – schools with stable and proven leadership
- Location – schools located within areas of high demand
- Viability for expansion – schemes which can be most easily and efficiently implemented
- Value for money - schools that can most cost effectively be expanded.

The Council are committed to ensuring the implementation of practical solutions to meet the basic need challenge and will work closely with schools to develop appropriate schemes that consider students' needs and support the effective delivery of the curriculum.

In order to support the needs of students in expanding schools and in line with the Education Funding Agency's recommended approach, the Council will seek continued support from Schools' Forum for a Growth Fund to support resultant revenue needs of schools which are required to provide extra places in order to meet basic need. Schools currently qualify for funding through the Growth Fund in the following circumstances:

- The school or academy has agreed with the LA to permanently increase its admission limit to meet basic need.
- The school or academy has agreed with the LA to provide a bulge class to meet basic need.
- The school or academy has agreed with the LA to expand in-year to meet basic need.

It should be noted that secondary schools have not previously required support via the Growth Fund and future calls on this fund would impact directly on Dedicated Schools Grant resources.

It is recognised that school funding is currently under review by central government and that at present there remains uncertainty regarding future funding mechanisms. This Strategy recognises the need for expanding schools to receive appropriate funding, in a timely manner, to meet students' needs.

When an expanding school is in the process of converting to academy status, the Council will seek to ensure that legal mechanisms are employed to ensure that the needs of the City are fulfilled and any approved investment is secured for the future.

Specifically the Council's legal representatives will seek to include reference to the enlarged capacity within relevant Commercial Transfer Agreements and representations will be made to the DfE to request that Funding Agreements reflect the capacity post-expansion.

The Introduction of Additional Capacity into Existing Cohorts

The size of citywide secondary school cohorts can fluctuate significantly in-year and in recent years some cohorts have grown significantly. It is recognised that as demand increases and levels of surplus reduce, that the introduction of additional capacity into existing cohorts may need to be considered in the future. However, introducing additional capacity, at points other than standard years of entry, can potentially destabilise individual cohorts, impact on school staffing structures and have significant budget implications.

This Strategy requires that the introduction of additional capacity into existing cohorts is only considered in response to significant demographic challenges and to support the needs of local communities. The introduction of additional capacity into existing cohorts should only be considered as a last resort and wherever possible should be avoided in Key Stage 4.

All-through Schools

An 'All-through School' is a school which provides both primary and secondary education.

In order to improve the diversity of the school estate in Wolverhampton the introduction of all-through schools will be explored in partnership with schools, where appropriate. Successful all-through schools can offer a number of benefits including:

- Reducing the number of transitions children face and reducing the risk of delayed learning at the start of secondary school
- Extending opportunities available to primary pupils; all-through schools can offer primary age pupils early access to specialist subject teaching and facilities
- Providing an additional opportunity to fully utilise the whole school estate to meet the anticipated future primary basic need challenge
- Providing school staff with wider career development opportunities
- Offering cost savings through economies of scale.

The introduction of all-through provision will only be considered where there is a demonstrable need for additional capacity in the local area and all-through provision would be an appropriate solution.

Temporary Accommodation

Across the secondary school estate in the City a small proportion of schools' schedules of accommodation include temporary facilities. Whilst it is recognised that the quality of temporary accommodation has improved significantly in recent years, this strategy requires that the replacement of temporary accommodation is prioritised, where appropriate.

Discontinuance of Maintained Provision

In certain circumstances the Council will consider the discontinuance of maintained provision.

This Strategy requires that the Council considers the closure of a school if the school meets two or more of the following criteria:

- The school is judged Inadequate by Ofsted
- The performance of students at the school is unacceptably low
- The school has a significant number of surplus places
- There are significant suitability issues in respect of the school's accommodation and/or site
- Closure could be effected without denying any students access to at least one alternative school with available places within a maximum of three miles (walking distance) of their home.¹
- The substantive Headteacher has left or is leaving.

Prior to initiating any statutory processes to close a school, the Council will consult with the School's Headteacher and the Chair of the School's Governing Body to discuss how the criteria may apply to their school. As part of this process the Council will review and consult with schools' Governing Bodies regarding:

- The likely impact of a school's closure on other schools in the local area, taking account of numbers on roll and the capacity of schools to enhance provision for children and families
- Projected levels of future demand
- The importance of the school to the wider community
- The condition, suitability and sufficiency of school facilities.

Intervention

In certain circumstances, the Council will facilitate the sponsorship of schools to become academies or support eligible schools to convert to academy status. Such steps will only be taken to support the overall improvement of education in the City, including the raising of students' attainment and progress. Where appropriate, the Council will work with other agencies to identify locally sourced sponsors to support the conversion of schools.

Post-16 Provision

Recent central government initiatives including raising the participation age, the introduction of Post-16 Study Programmes and apprenticeship delivery require extensive partnership and collaboration in order to be successful.

¹ If the closing school is denominational, then alternative denominational provision should be available within a maximum of three miles of students' homes, where appropriate.

This strategy recognises the need for the Council to continue existing, and further expand, collaboration arrangements with educational establishments in the City including secondary schools/academies, the University of Wolverhampton and the City of Wolverhampton College.

This Strategy recognises that ensuring that learners can access a broad, high quality post-16 offer can be challenging given existing financial constraints. The role of local authorities is to lead in setting local and sub-regional priorities for 16-24 skills provision. Consequently, post-16 planning will continue to focus on how schools can best meet future need, but also support collaboration and partnership across all post 16 settings, informed by the needs and aspirations of its learners.

Effective collaboration between providers can offer a number of benefits including offering improved efficiency and value for money, providing a broader offer to students, countering existing recruitment issues and optimising opportunities for learners to debate and develop their understanding of key concepts.

Specialist Provision

The Council recognises the value of some specialist provision being attached to mainstream secondary schools. For example, sensory resource bases are the most appropriate way to meet the needs of students with sensory needs and this Strategy requires that any secondary school reorganisation does not detrimentally impact on such provision.

Resource Base provision across the City is commissioned by the Council and service level agreements are in place with individual providers/schools. Council representatives are currently undertaking a review of specialist provision across the City. This review is aligned to the Council's Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy which aims to promote inclusion, maximize young people's opportunities to be independent and enable young people with special educational needs and disabilities to be recognised as fully integrated citizens with the ability to contribute to their local community.

Change Management

It is recognised that making significant changes to individual establishments can have a disruptive effect on the delivery of education. This strategy requires that any secondary school reorganisation or development scheme seeks to minimise disruption and avoid any longer term detriment to students.

Estate Management

It is recommended that a long term approach is taken to the management of educational assets in order to ensure that fluctuations in demand can be effectively and efficiently catered for. Where appropriate, sites should be reserved as contingency to cater for anticipated increases in demand, such as that resulting from new housing developments. However, it should be recognised that adopting a longer term approach will result in short-term budgetary pressures as sites must be secured and maintained.

Where circumstances arise that present the opportunity to use existing school accommodation in different ways, this Strategy would require that priority is given to the provision of statutory school places.

Other Considerations

This strategy requires that when considering secondary school organisation:

- The Council works closely with Diocesan Authorities to ensure that an appropriate balance of denominational and community places are available.
- That, if at all possible, the need for compulsory redundancy is avoided.
- Equal opportunities are promoted and that particular groups of children are not disadvantaged.

Strategy Review

The Strategy is subject to review on a biennial basis.

Annex A: School Locations

