

Update on Primary, Secondary, and Post-16 Mainstream Sufficiency Plans 2025-2030

Key Messages

For Primary, Forum members are asked to note:

- That officers will continue to monitor the impact of falling rolls and provide the sector with latest forecast data.
- That officers will continue to support schools with surplus places and undertake actions as required, including reduction in published admission numbers where needed.

For Secondary, Forum members are asked to note:

- That allocation forecasts are utilised and uplifted in order to provide a contingency of additional places in the secondary system, to allow for in-year movement, in-year admissions and to help mitigate demand from variable factors.
- The need for growth in secondary places from 2025 onwards and that officers are seeking to work with the sector to develop solutions.
- Note that citywide places are forecast to return to current levels in the early 2030s.

For Post-16, Forum members are asked to note that officers will continue to work with the post-16 sector and the Department for Education (DfE) to better understand the sufficiency position across the city and identify gaps and solutions to address.

1. Introduction/background

1.1. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure there are enough school places available in their area for every child of compulsory school age (the 'sufficiency duty'). This is set out under section 14 of the 1996 Education Act.

1.2. Whilst the LA has the statutory responsibility to ensure there are enough school places in the area, the LA does not have the statutory power to compel schools in academy trusts to provide places. It is therefore imperative that we work in partnership and collaboratively with the sector to manage sufficiency pressures, this is the expectation set by the DfE.

1.3. The LA has a duty to consider the organisation of school provision to create a sustainable network of schools, and in some circumstances rationalisation of provision can benefit other schools by reducing surplus places in an area so that the remaining schools can operate more efficiently with more certainty over their pupil numbers.

2. Primary Sector

- 2.1. For the primary sector (Reception to Year 6), the recent data review shows there continues to be a citywide position of excess/surplus primary school places in Sheffield and this is forecast to remain the case for the next 5-7 years.
- 2.2. The citywide surplus is as a result of falling rolls, due to ongoing low birth rates. Despite the citywide surplus, this has not been the trend in all primary schools and some pockets of primary place deficits are in the process of being addressed through permanent expansions.
- 2.3. We will continue to monitor areas where pockets of place shortfall/deficits exist. Intervention will only be considered where there is a shortage of places across a sub-planning area.
- 2.4. We will continue to support schools with surplus places and undertake actions as required, including reduction in published admission numbers where needed.

3. Secondary Sector

- 3.1. For the secondary sector (Year 7 to Year 11), the recent data review shows a continuing trend from last year with several planning areas forecast to see a sustained shortfall/deficit of secondary places from 2025 onwards.
- 3.2. To deliver the number of secondary places required, we want to work with the sector to develop solutions. It is envisaged that a hybrid approach will be required, which will consist of:
 - individual secondary school expansion projects (either temporary or permanent) to be developed in areas of forecast high demand, and
 - consideration of all options to expand or develop new additional provision to support sufficiency to meet both medium- and longer-term forecast demand.
- 3.3. Citywide secondary demand is currently forecast to return to current levels from the early 2030's, this dynamic needs to be carefully managed.

4. Post-16 Sector

- 4.1. For the post-16 sector (Year 12 to 13), learner numbers are forecast to increase each year, reaching a 'peak' in 2028/29.
- 4.2. We are already working closely with the sector to help support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and we are also liaising with post-16 providers to better understand the post-16 sufficiency position including ensuring we have sufficient data to enable more accurate forecasting.

4.3. We need to work collaboratively with the sector to ensure sufficiency of post-16 places across the city and consider the impact of planned housing on the likely demand for post-16 places.

5. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- **Note** the update provided and support continued Forum engagement and involvement in addressing sufficiency issues.