



LEAD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

DECISIONS to be made by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Councillor Bob Standley

TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 2.00 PM

REMOTE MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

AGENDA

1. Decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member on 16 October 2023 (*Pages 3 - 4*)
2. Disclosures of interests
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the Agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct
3. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Lead Member considers to be urgent and propose to take at the end of the appropriate part of the Agenda
4. Holy Cross CE Primary School (*Pages 5 - 14*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
5. St Pancras Catholic Primary School (*Pages 15 - 24*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
6. East Sussex School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027 (*Pages 25 - 136*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
7. Revision of Home to School Transport policies (*Pages 137 - 188*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
8. Any urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3

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6 November 2023

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LEAD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Councillor Bob Standley, on 16 October 2023 at Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

26. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2023

26.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023.

27. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

27.1 There were none.

28. URGENT ITEMS

28.1 There were none.

29. REPORTS

29.1 A copy of the reports referred to below is included in the minute book.

30. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS 2025-26- PERMISSION TO CONSULT

30.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services seeking approval to consult on the Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in East Sussex 2025-26.

30.2 It was noted that following the publication of proposed numbers at appendix 2 of the report, Chailey School has requested their Published Admission Number (PAN) is increased from 174 to 180 which will be included in the consultation.

DECISIONS

30.3 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- 1) agree to consult on the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools for the 2025-26 academic year as set out in appendix 1 of the report;
- 2) note that there are no proposed changes to the admission arrangements;
- 3) to agree to consult on the proposed PANs for Community and VC schools for 2025-26, as set out in appendix 2 of the report (except for Chailey School where the proposed PAN will increase from 174 to 180) and to note the proposed change to the PAN for Mayfield CE School and Chailey School; and
- 4) to agree to consult on the proposed co-ordinated schemes of admissions as set out in appendices 3-5 of the report.

REASONS

30.4 The County Council is required by law to consult on its admissions arrangements every seven years, or sooner if any changes to those arrangements are proposed for the schools for which it is the admission authority.

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **14 November 2023**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Holy Cross Church of England Primary School**

Purpose of report: **To determine the statutory proposal to discontinue Holy Cross Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2023.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of Holy Cross Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2023.

1. Background

1.1 Holy Cross Church of England Primary School ("Holy Cross") is a voluntary aided (VA) school located in Uckfield. It has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 30 and capacity for 210 pupils from Reception to Year 6.

1.2 On 22 May 2023, the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability ("the Lead Member") gave approval for East Sussex County Council ("the local authority") to consult on a proposal to discontinue (close) Holy Cross. The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ("the Regulations") set out the reasons for closing a maintained school. These include, but are not limited to, where:

- there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;
- it is to be amalgamated with another school;
- it has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and the Secretary of State has revoked the academy order;
- it is no longer considered viable;
- it is being replaced by a new school.

1.3 The decision to consult was taken in the context of the many challenges the school has faced in recent years in relation to leadership, retention of staff, quality of provision, low pupil numbers and surplus places in the local area. Despite significant support from both the local authority and the Diocese of Chichester ("the diocese"), these challenges remain. As a result, the school is considered extremely vulnerable. The key challenges were set out in the [report to the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability on 22 May 2023](#).

1.4 On 11 September 2023, the Lead Member considered a report on the outcome of the consultation and approved the publication of a statutory proposal to close the school on 31 December 2023. The outcome of the consultation was set out in the [report to the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability on 11 September 2023](#).

2. Statutory closure process

2.1 In accordance with Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ("the EIA 2006"), as amended by the Education Act 2011, and the Regulations, a statutory proposal was published on the local authority's website on 22 September 2023 and sent to stakeholders. A brief notice containing the website address of the full proposal and details on how interested parties could object to, or comment on, the proposal, was published in the Sussex Express and posted on the gates to the school's premises. A copy of the statutory proposal can be viewed in the Cabinet and Members' rooms at County Hall.

2.2 By the end of the representation period on 19 October 2023, two responses had been received. One, from the diocese, supports the proposal and one, from a member of the school community, is against

it as they are concerned about housing growth in the town, the impact on children's mental health and because of the history of the school. The representations are available to view in the Cabinet and Members' rooms at County Hall.

2.3 In accordance with the EIA 2006 and the Regulations, the local authority, as the responsible body, is required to determine the statutory proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. In doing so, the Lead Member, as decision maker, must give due regard to the factors set out in the following sections.

3. Pupil numbers and admissions

3.1 As referenced in 1.1 above, Holy Cross has a PAN of 30 and capacity for 210 pupils from Reception to Year 6 (ages 4-11). It is a co-educational school for boys and girls. As a VA school, the governing board is the admissions authority for the school, with responsibility for determining its admissions arrangements.

3.2 At the May 2023 School Census, Holy Cross had 26 children on roll. There were 184 (88%) surplus places.

Table 1: Pupil numbers at Holy Cross Church of England Primary School, May 2023

Pupil numbers and surplus places	PAN	Capacity	2022/23 NOR								Surplus places	% Surplus places
			Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total		
Holy Cross Church of England Primary School	30	210	1	1	5	4	7	0	8	26	184	88%

Source: May 2023 School Census

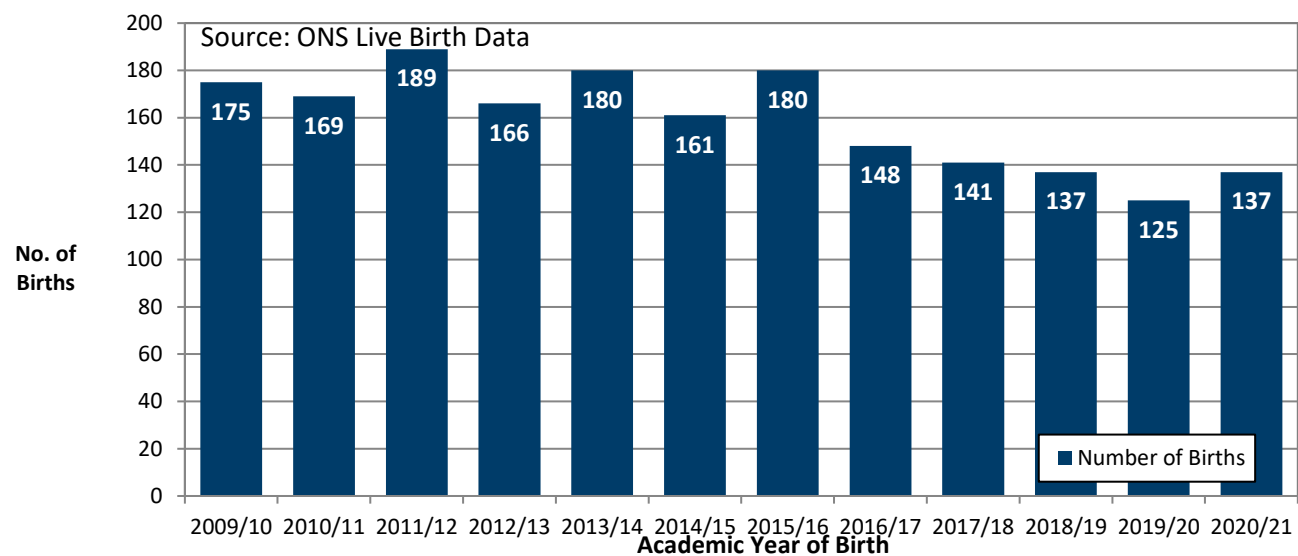
3.3 In the period since the closure consultation was launched, the number on roll at Holy Cross has fallen further. At the time of writing, there were 11 children on roll, with 199 (95%) surplus places.

3.4 At full capacity, Holy Cross would be expected to organise across seven classes. As a result of its falling pupil numbers, the school reorganised its class structure from the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year. Having started the year with three classes, it subsequently moved to two classes, for Reception to Year 2 and Years 3 to 6. Due to the subsequent further fall in pupil numbers, the school is running one class for pupils from all age groups in the current academic year, with tailored learning opportunities for pupils.

4. Demand for places and displaced pupils

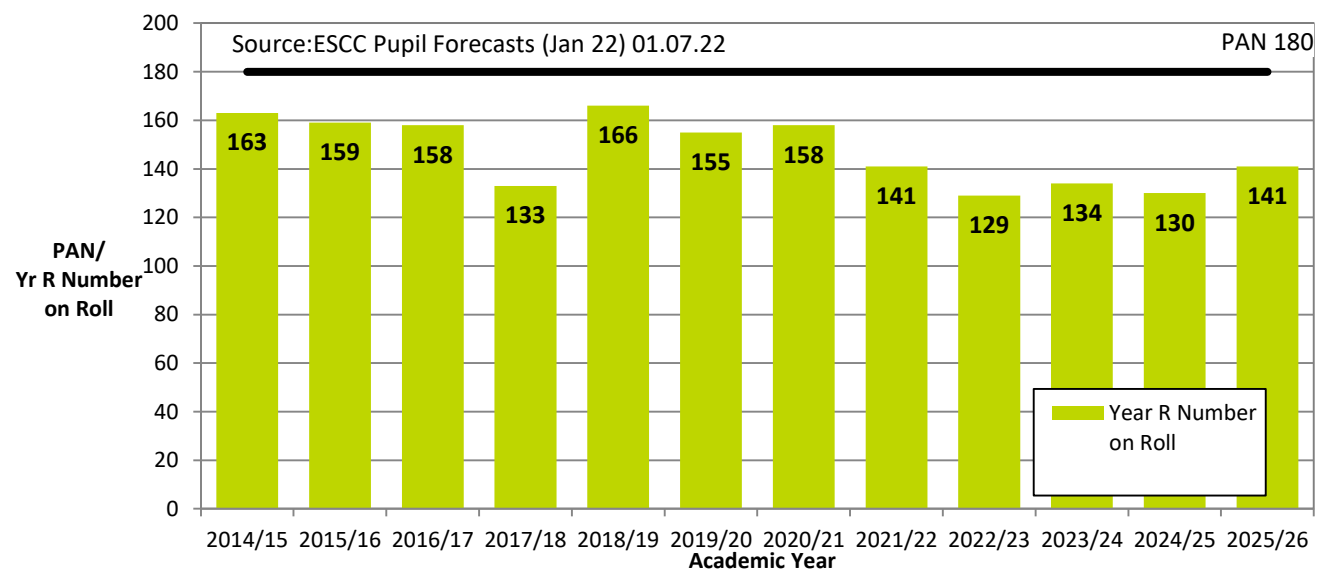
4.1 As described in the [School Organisation Plan 2022 to 2026](#), births in Uckfield have fallen significantly in recent years.

Table 2: Uckfield births



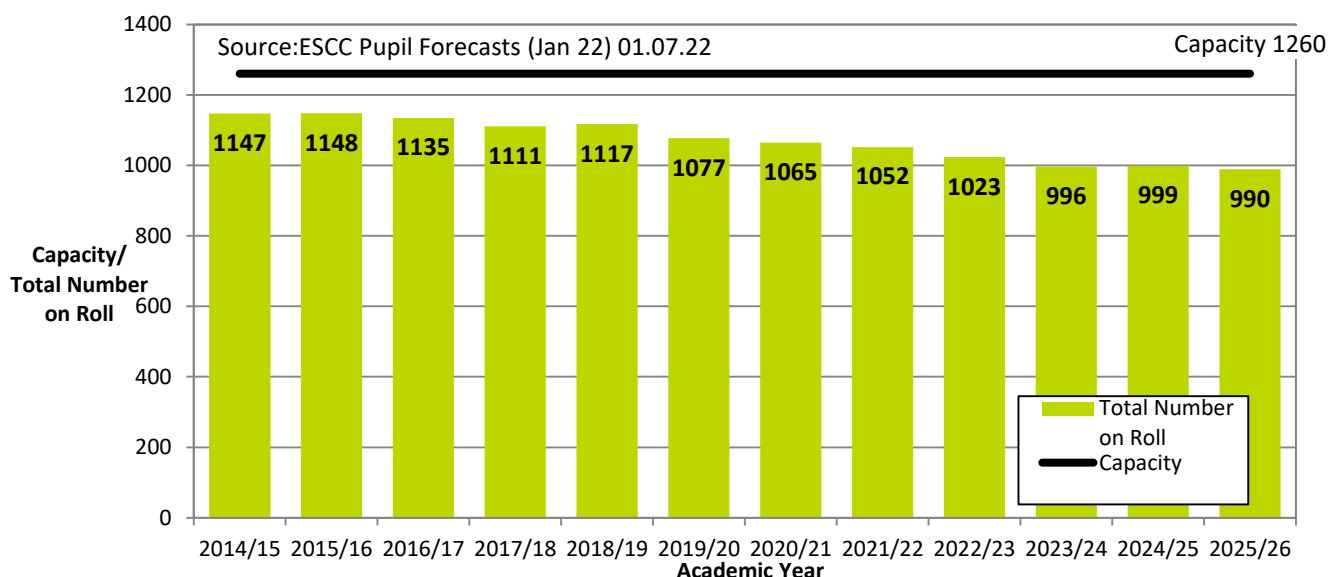
4.2 Based on birth and GP registration data, we expect Reception intakes in the town to remain low until at least 2025/26.

Table 3: Uckfield primary reception numbers



4.3 Lower intakes are leading to higher numbers of surplus places in the town, potentially rising to 21% by 2025/26.

Table 4: Uckfield total primary numbers



4.4 The local authority has undertaken an assessment of capacity in local schools using pupil number returns submitted by schools to the local authority in October 2023. This has enabled the local authority to assess the capacity of schools in the area to accommodate children displaced from Holy Cross in the event that it should close on 31 December 2023.

Table 5: Primary capacity and numbers on roll 2023/24

Uckfield primary schools	Primary capacity and primary total number on roll							
	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Year group capacity of schools excluding Holy Cross	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	1,050
Year group NOR including Holy Cross	137	142	148	156	155	162	131	1,030
Difference	13	8	2	-6	-5	-12	19	

Source: School number returns October 2023

Uckfield schools: Harlands Primary School, Manor Primary School, Rocks Park Primary School, St Philip's Catholic Primary School.

4.5 As can be seen, there are forecast to be sufficient places in Reception and Years 1, 2 and 6, but insufficient places in Years 3, 4 and 5.

4.6 All of the children still on roll at Holy Cross are resident in Uckfield. Unlike Key Stage 1 there is no class size legislation at Key Stage 2 and schools regularly have classes in excess of their PAN in those year groups. As pupil numbers at Holy Cross are very small, it is the local authority's intention to work with receiving schools in the town to accommodate displaced children. In some instances, this would mean schools going over PAN in those year groups. The local authority would provide support to schools with this. The local authority does not believe it would be necessary or practicable to open up additional classes for such small numbers.

4.7 In the event that Holy Cross was to close, surplus capacity in the area would reduce to around 6% by 2025/26, based on table 4 above. This is in line with the recommendation in the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, which states:

"It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools".

4.8 Following the Lead Member decision on 11 September 2023, and given the limited time between a decision being taken and the potential closure date, the local authority invited parents and carers of children at Holy Cross to express a preference for a place at an alternative school in the event that the school should close on 31 December 2023. This provided families with appropriate time to consider which school they would like their child/ren to potentially attend from 1 January 2024. Parents and carers were asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. In the event that closure is agreed, parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to their child's home where a place is available. If the closure is agreed, the local authority would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would be made in line with the admissions policy as set out in the [school admissions booklet](#).

5. Impact on staff

5.1 The proposal also affects members of staff at the school. In the event the decision is taken for the school to close, a formal consultation would begin with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and trade union representatives in line with the local authority's Managing Change Policy. If the closure is agreed, the local authority would work alongside the school to ensure that all of the procedures for managing the change process outlined in the policy are followed. All staff would be entitled to be considered for redeployment to a suitable alternative post within the local authority for centrally managed roles. For school based advertised vacancies, the local authority would liaise with East Sussex maintained schools regarding the availability of staff at risk of redundancy from 31 December 2023, to seek the agreement of a school with a suitable vacancy to participate in the redeployment process in order to fill the vacancy.

6. Impact on the community

6.1 It is recognised that the closure of Holy Cross would result in the loss of a community provision in the area. However, there would continue to be sufficient places in alternative schools in the area.

6.2 In the event that Holy Cross closes, surplus places in the area would reduce, thereby strengthening pupil numbers and the viability of other schools. All pupils would have continued access to good local provision; all other schools in Uckfield have an Ofsted rating of Good.

6.3 Concern was raised about the pressure that new housing developments in Uckfield will create on schools and that more school places will be needed, not less. The local authority's pupil forecasts take account of housing growth in the area based on information provided annually by Wealden District Council. Although unlikely to create pressure in the short term, the development of 1,000 new homes at Ridgewood Farm to the southwest of Uckfield is likely to generate a significant number of school age children in the medium to long term. Given the size of the development, it is important that there is a local primary school to serve it. For this reason, the local authority has an option agreement on land within the development site for a new school and will bring forward proposals at the appropriate time to establish provision in the area.

6.4 No external clubs or organisations hire the school premises out-of-hours.

6.5 The local authority and the diocese acknowledge that where a school closure is proposed it will have an impact on the local community. Good schools engage parents and carers in their children's education and reach out to the wider community for support, as well as providing community facilities. However, these must be considered as additional benefits to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, financial position and quality of education must be the considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close, this cannot be the overriding factor.

7. Rural primary schools

7.1 Holy Cross is not designated as a rural primary school under the Department for Education's Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022. Therefore, the presumption against the closure of rural primary schools does not apply in this instance.

8. Balance of denominational provision

8.1 Currently in Uckfield and the surrounding area there are 1,050 denominational places in seven schools and 840 non-denominational places in three schools. In the event that Holy Cross closes, the number of denominational places would reduce to 840 in six schools.

8.2 All non-denominational state funded schools in England must provide collective worship of “a broadly Christian character”. The Diocese of Chichester Diocesan Board of Education recognises “*that church schools serve the whole community and are not exclusive to worshipping families*”.

8.3 Parental preference would be considered where possible when allocating alternative school places to pupils at the school. However, parents do have the right to have their children excused from worship in any state funded school, whether non-denominational or faith based.

8.4 The six denominational schools in Uckfield and the surrounding area are:

- St Philip’s Catholic Primary School
- Bonners CE Primary School
- Buxted CE Primary School
- Fletching CE Primary School
- Framfield CE Primary School
- Little Horsted CE Primary School

8.5 The three non-denominational schools in Uckfield and the surrounding area are:

- Harlands Primary School
- Manor Primary School
- Rocks Park Primary School

9. Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

9.1 There is no designated specialist provision for children with SEND at Holy Cross. Data for the school at the May 2023 School Census, showed that the percentage of SEND pupils identified by the school was 35% (9 out of 26). No pupils had an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). In comparison, the East Sussex average for SEND pupils in primary schools was 17.1%.

9.2 All schools have the same duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 to identify and provide for pupils with SEND. As the barriers to learning that a child with SEND might experience change over time, the local authority expects provision at a school to adapt and change alongside these developments.

9.3 In the event that Holy Cross closes, the transition to new schools for the children would be managed very carefully with additional support to meet the identified needs of the children. The local authority recognises the additional challenges for staff, children, particularly those with SEND, and their families. It also recognises the potential impact on an individual’s mental health and wellbeing. For this reason, a team of professionals from the local authority (including the Education Psychology Service, SEN Practice and Standards and the Mental Health Support Team) are supporting the school and providing help to staff, children, and families.

10. Travel

10.1 The distance from Holy Cross to local schools is set out below. These are measured by the shortest available route in each case.

Table 7: Distances from Holy Cross Church of England Primary School

School	Distance (miles)
Uckfield schools	
Harlands Primary School	1.0
Manor Primary School	0.81
Rocks Park Primary School	0.44
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	0.6
Surrounding rural schools	
Bonnors CE Primary School	1.99
Buxted CE Primary School	2.3
Fletching CE Primary School	3.77
Framfield CE Primary School	2.26
Little Horsted CE Primary School, Seaford	1.99

10.2 As can be seen, all Uckfield schools are within statutory walking distance from Holy Cross. Distances to the closest surrounding rural schools varies between just under two miles to just under 4 miles.

10.3 Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils who meet the criteria set out in the local authority's school transport [policy](#).

11. Maintained nursery school

11.1 Holy Cross does not have a maintained nursery. A private nursery provider occupies part of the school building under the terms of a lease. Were the nursery to close because of the school closing, the local authority believes there would be sufficient early years places in the local area to meet demand.

12. Sixth form provision

12.1 As a primary school, there is no sixth form provision at Holy Cross. Therefore, no consideration should be given to this factor.

13. Alternatives to closure

13.1 The local authority and the diocese have supported the school to try to identify a long-term solution, without success. The low pupil numbers and the resulting significant impact this has on its budget means that the school is not an attractive proposition for school partners. This can be evidenced by some of the options that have been explored:

- Brokering a school improvement partnership with the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT) with a view to the school joining the multi academy trust. This proved unsuccessful as DCAT concluded that the school was not viable.
- Supporting the school to explore partnership with a local church school. This proved unsuccessful as the proposed partner school decided that there were too many challenges, including financial viability, to partner with the school.
- Supporting the school to explore joining another local federation. This proved unsuccessful as the proposed federation similarly decided that there were too many challenges, including financial viability, to partner with the school.
- The diocese has supported the governing board to explore academy trust options with all existing Diocese of Chichester academy trusts, however, all the trusts expressed concern about the school's financial viability and subsequent impact on their own trusts. The falling numbers on roll and the impact this has on the school's budget has meant that the school is simply not attractive to academy trusts or other school partners.

13.2 All alternative options to closure have therefore been considered. The local authority and the diocese believe there are no other viable options available to the school.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

14.1 The Lead Member is required to have 'due regard' to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) in determining the proposal. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken to identify any equality implications of the proposal and to address any concerns through appropriate mitigations. The local authority considers the proposal to be a proportionate response to the issues that have arisen at Holy Cross and is appropriate on the basis of concerns about the long-term viability of the school. It considers that all children impacted by the proposal, including those with protected characteristics, would be enabled to receive a good quality of education at an alternative school. All other schools in Uckfield have an Ofsted rating of 'Good'. The local authority would work with local schools to put in place effective transition arrangements for all children.

14.2 The local authority does not consider that any other groups who share the protected characteristics, including any parents and carers or members of the local community who use the school, should be more affected by the proposal than any other. All potential impacts have been assessed and appropriate mitigations set out in the EqIA. The EqIA is available to view in the Cabinet and Members' rooms at County Hall.

15. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

15.1 By the end of the representation period following the publication of the statutory proposal, two responses had been received, one in support of the proposal and one against it, as set out in 2.2 above. While recognising the nature of objection to the proposal, the local authority believes the case for the closure of Holy Cross is strong for the following reasons.

- The school has suffered from a lack of popularity in the local community for some years, which has led to falling pupil numbers going back over a decade.
- There are surplus school places in Uckfield. The local authority would work with local schools to ensure there are places available for children displaced from Holy Cross in the event it closes.
- The school has struggled to secure good outcomes for pupils over time.
- In recent years the school has experienced several changes of leadership and a significant turnover of teaching staff which has impacted on the quality and consistency of education.
- The diocese and the Interim Executive Board at the school are supportive of closure.

15.2 Having carefully considered the feedback received during the initial consultation and the subsequent representation period, the local authority has concluded that Holy Cross can no longer be considered viable.

15.3 The Regulations set out the options the decision-maker has when making a decision on a closure proposal. The decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification, as specified in regulation 16 of the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations.

15.4 For the reasons set out in the report, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of Holy Cross Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2023 without conditions being added or modifications made to the closure proposal.

ALISON JEFFERY
Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Claire Dowling

Councillor Chris Dowling

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Agenda Item 5

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **14 November 2023**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **St Pancras Catholic Primary School**

Purpose of report: **To determine the statutory proposal to discontinue St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024.

1. Background

1.1 St Pancras Catholic Primary School ("St Pancras") is a voluntary aided (VA) school located in Lewes. It has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 20 and capacity for 140 pupils from Reception to Year 6.

1.2 In March 2023, the governing board of St Pancras, supported by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton ("the diocese"), resolved to consult on a proposal to discontinue (close) the school with effect from 31 August 2024. In a letter to parents and carers early in Term 5 of the 2022/23 academic year, the governing board stated:

"In the last few years, we have met an ever-increasing challenge. A declining birth rate in East Sussex has resulted in a significant and continuing surplus of places in Lewes, with our school, already smaller than average, being negatively affected. Our admission intakes have been falling, and with that, inevitably, the associated funding which is completely dependent on the number of children on roll. Whilst the support of the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton has been valuable in maintaining the site, the school is a state-funded school, and must remain financially viable on the basis of the amount of money that is received from the Government. We are advised that population projections for the short and medium term do not look more promising.

This severe reduction in numbers has meant that the school has been struggling to meet pupils' needs. Faced by the prospect of being financially non-viable, last year we reduced the number of classes - and we want to record our thanks to all staff for the huge amount of effort and ingenuity they invested, to make this transition work for the children. However, numbers on roll have fallen more sharply, and we find that we are unable to sustain this financially without taking further action that would very seriously compromise the quality of education".

1.3 The governing board and the diocese have become increasingly concerned about the future viability of St Pancras. In each of the last eight years, the number of families expressing a first preference for a place at the school have fallen below the school's PAN of 20 which has impacted on the number of children on roll at the school.

Table 1: Historical first preference data for St Pancras Catholic Primary School

First preferences	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
St Pancras Catholic Primary School	11	10	12	15	19	15	9	10

Source: East Sussex County Council school admissions data

1.4 At the May 2023 School Census, St Pancras had 105 children on roll, with 35 (25%) surplus places. At the time of writing, numbers on roll had fallen to 35, with 105 (75%) surplus places. The governing board acknowledged that consultation on school closure would cause uncertainty within the school community and contribute to a reduction in pupil numbers at the school.

1.5 The governing board is concerned that low pupil numbers make it difficult for the school to be financially viable and to regularly have good outcomes for pupils. St Pancras was rated as good by Ofsted in 2013 and 2018. The school was inspected by Ofsted on 14 March 2023. The outcome states: *“There has been no change to this school’s overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.”* The governing board believes the school’s capacity to address the areas for improvement outlined in the report would be severely limited by its low pupil numbers and the subsequent impact on the budget. As a result, the governing board believes the school would not be able to operate effectively, nor crucially, provide the quality of education to which the pupils are entitled.

2. Statutory closure process

2.1 In accordance with Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (“the EIA 2006”), as amended by the Education Act 2011, and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 (“the Regulations”), the governing board of a VA school may publish proposals to close its own school. East Sussex County Council, as the local authority, is the decision maker for school closure proposals.

2.2 As set out in the Regulations, the reasons for closing a maintained school include, but are not limited to, where:

- there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;
- it is to be amalgamated with another school;
- it has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and the Secretary of State has revoked the academy order;
- it is no longer considered viable;
- it is being replaced by a new school.

2.3 The governing board has identified St Pancras as being at risk of closure due to the surplus places in the school and the wider area, and its anticipated limited capacity to address the areas for improvement outlined in the Ofsted judgement in March 2023. For these reasons the governing board and the diocese consider St Pancras to no longer be viable.

2.4 In accordance with the EIA 2006 and the Regulations, the governing board consulted with its school community and key stakeholders between 15 May and 3 July 2023. A copy of the consultation document can be viewed in the Cabinet and Members’ rooms at County Hall. Consultation meetings were held for staff and parents and carers on 22 May 2023, which the local authority attended. The school also undertook a pupil voice activity to understand how children at St Pancras felt about the proposal.

2.5 By the end of the consultation period, the governing board had received 25 responses from 23 families at the school (including one anonymous response) via the school’s consultation website. Of the responses, 14 (56%) agreed with the proposal and 11 (44%) did not. 22 responses were received from 21 parishioners (one parishioner responded twice) and one response was received from an interested party by email. Concerns identified by respondents include, but are not limited to, the impact on children at the school and the arrangements for finding places at alternative schools, the loss of Catholic education provision in the area and the number of new homes being built in Lewes. These concerns are addressed later in the report. A summary of all the responses received, and the feedback from the pupil voice activity, are available to view in the Cabinet and Members’ rooms at County Hall.

2.6 The governing board met on 11 July 2023 to consider the consultation responses and determine next steps. Governors resolved, by a majority vote, to proceed with the closure process by publishing a statutory proposal. A statutory proposal was published on the school’s website on 8 September 2023 and sent to stakeholders in accordance with the Regulations. A brief notice containing the website address of the full proposal and details on how interested parties could object to, or comment on, the proposal, was published in the Sussex Express and posted on the gates to the school’s premises. A copy of the statutory proposal can be viewed in the Cabinet and Members’ rooms at County Hall.

2.7 By the end of the representation period on 6 October 2023, five responses had been received, raising comments and concerns about the proposal and, in one case, questioning the consultation process. The responses are available to view in the Cabinet and Members' rooms at County Hall.

2.8 In accordance with the EIA 2006 and the Regulations, the local authority, as the responsible body, is required to determine the statutory proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. In doing so, the Lead Member, as decision maker, must give due regard to the factors set out in the following sections.

3. Pupil numbers and admissions

3.1 As referenced in 1.1 above, St Pancras has a PAN of 20 and capacity for 140 pupils from Reception to Year 6 (ages 4-11). It is a co-educational school for boys and girls. As a VA school, the governing board is the admissions authority for the school, with responsibility for determining its admissions arrangements.

3.2 At the May 2023 School Census, St Pancras had 105 children on roll. There were 35 (25%) surplus places.

Table 2: Pupil numbers at St Pancras Catholic Primary School, May 2023

Pupil numbers and surplus places	PAN	Capacity	2022/23 NOR								Surplus places	% Surplus places
			Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total		
St Pancras Catholic Primary School	20	140	11	13	18	15	16	17	15	105	33	25%

Source: May 2023 School Census

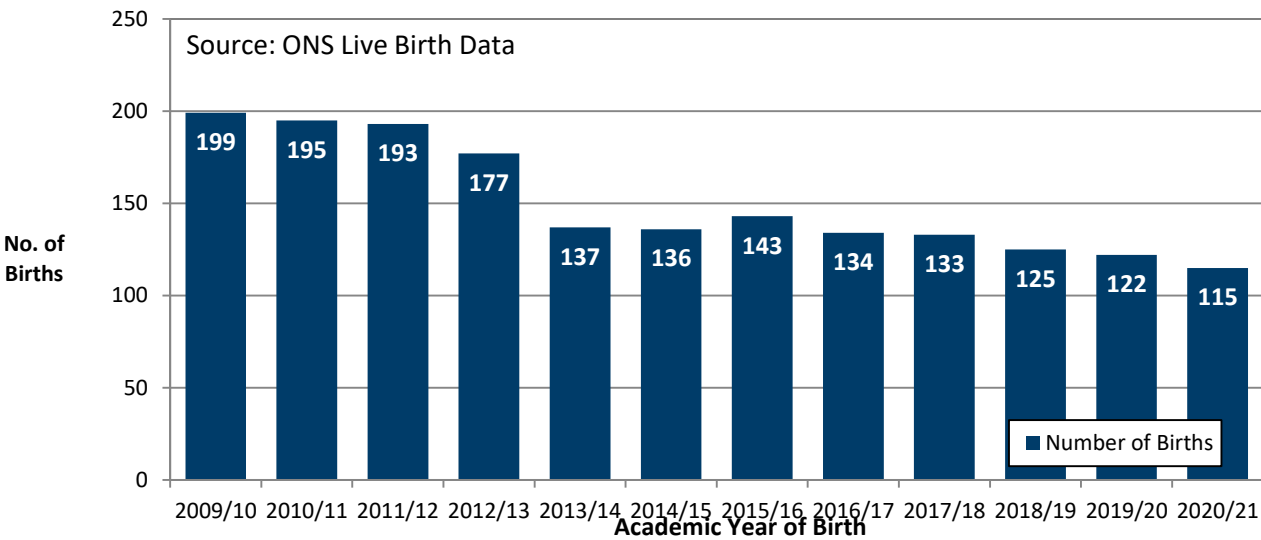
3.3 In the period since the governing board launched its closure consultation in May 2023, the number on roll at St Pancras has fallen noticeably. At the time of writing, there were 35 children on roll, with 105 (75%) surplus places.

3.4 At full capacity, St Pancras would be expected to organise across five classes. During the 2022/23 academic year, the school organised across four classes. Due to the noticeable fall in pupil numbers, the school moved to a three-class organisation from 1 September 2023.

4. Demand for places and displaced pupils

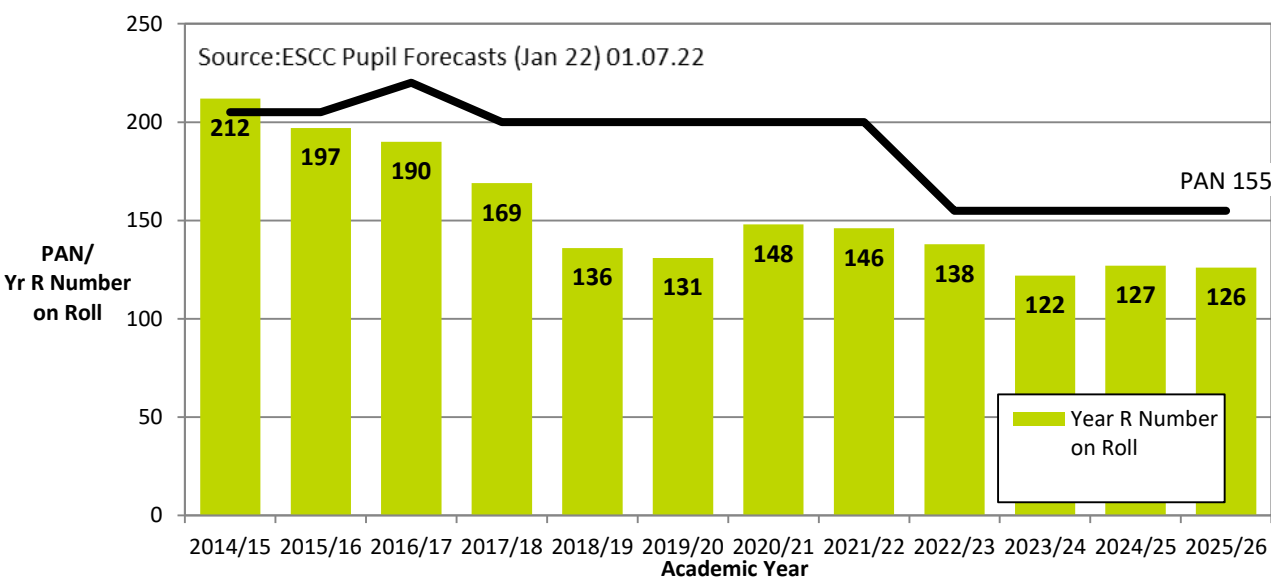
4.1 As described in the [School Organisation Plan 2022 to 2026](#), births in Lewes continue to fall and have been particularly low since 2013/14.

Table 3: Lewes births



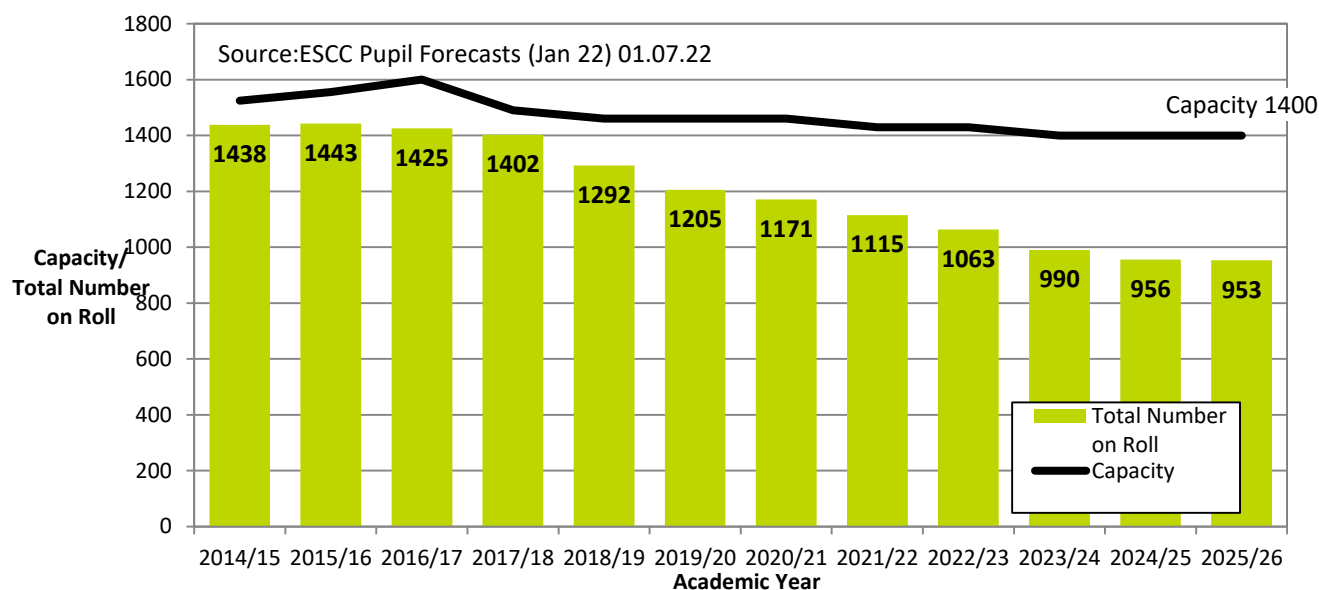
4.2 Based on birth and GP registration data, we expect Reception intakes in the town to remain low until at least 2025/26.

Table 4: Lewes Primary Reception numbers



4.3 Lower intakes are leading to higher numbers of surplus places in the town, potentially rising to 32% by 2025/26. Three schools in the area have 25% or more surplus places.

Table 5: Lewes total primary numbers



4.4 The local authority has undertaken an assessment of capacity in local schools using pupil number returns submitted by schools to the local authority in October 2023. This has enabled the local authority to assess the capacity of schools in the area to accommodate children displaced from St Pancras in the event that it should close on 31 August 2024. For the purposes of the analysis, the current year group cohorts (including those at St Pancras) have been rolled forward one year to assess the likely position in September 2024. The current Year 6 cohort, which will move on to secondary education in the 2024/25 academic year, has been replaced by the Reception intake forecast in table 4 above.

Table 6: Primary capacity and predicted numbers on roll 2024/25

Lewes primary schools	Primary capacity and primary total number on roll							
	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Year group capacity of schools excluding St Pancras	135	135	135	165	135	135	165	1,005
Year group NOR including St Pancras	127	128	137	149	145	141	130	957
Difference	8	7	-2	16	-10	-6	35	

Source: School number returns October 2023 rolled forward one year. Reception forecast taken from table 4. Lewes schools: South Malling CE Primary School, Southover CE Primary School, Wallands Community Primary School, Western Road Community Primary School.

4.5 As can be seen, there are forecast to be sufficient places in Reception and Years 1, 3 and 6, but insufficient places in Years 2, 4 and 5.

4.6 The majority of children that have left St Pancras in recent months have found places at either Wallands Community School or Southover CE Primary School. Of the 27 children currently on roll at St Pancras between Reception and Year 5, 23 are resident in Lewes.

4.7 As a result of falling Reception numbers and reduced demand for places at both schools, the local authority approved a reduction in the PAN at Southover CE Primary School (from 60 to 45) and Wallands Community Primary School (from 60 to 30) from the 2022/23 academic year. Accommodation was not removed from either school and can be brought back into use if required. In the event that St Pancras closes on 31 August 2024, it would be the local authority's intention to work with both schools to open additional capacity for September 2024, should it be necessary, to ensure there are sufficient places in the remaining Lewes schools for every child that wants a place.

4.8 In the event that St Pancras was to close, surplus capacity in the area would reduce to around 24% by 2025/26, based on table 5 above. This would still be significantly more than was recommended by the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

"It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools".

4.9 For those families who live outside Lewes and would like a place nearer to their home address, there are currently spaces available in their local schools.

4.10 In the event that a decision is taken to close St Pancras, parents and carers of children at the school would be asked to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to their child's home where a place is available. The local authority would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would be made in line with the admissions policy as set out in the [school admissions booklet](#).

5. Impact on staff

5.1 The proposal also affects members of staff at the school. In the event that a decision is taken for the school to close, a formal consultation would begin with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and trade union representatives in line with the local authority's Managing Change Policy. The local authority would work alongside the school to ensure that all of the procedures for managing the change process outlined in the policy are followed. All staff would be entitled to be considered for redeployment to a suitable alternative post within the local authority for centrally managed roles. For school based advertised vacancies, the local authority would liaise with East Sussex maintained schools regarding the availability of staff at risk of redundancy from 31 August 2024, to seek the agreement of a school with a suitable vacancy to participate in the redeployment process in order to fill the vacancy.

6. Impact on the community

6.1 It is recognised that if the proposal went ahead the closure of St Pancras would result in the loss of a community provision in the area. However, there would continue to be sufficient places in alternative schools.

6.2 In the event that St Pancras closes, surplus places in the area would reduce, thereby strengthening pupil numbers and the viability of other schools. All pupils would have continued access to good local provision; all other schools in Lewes have an Ofsted rating of Good.

6.3 Concern was raised by some respondents about the pressure that new housing developments in Lewes will create on schools and that it would be short-sighted to close St Pancras. The local authority's pupil forecasts take account of housing growth based on information provided annually by local planning authorities. As described above, there would still be significant surplus capacity in Lewes to meet demand generated from new housing developments in the town, with spare accommodation able to be brought back in to use at Southover CE Primary School and Wallands Community Primary School should that be required.

6.4 An external agency currently uses the St Pancras premises to run a holiday club. The school also rents out space to some private sports and dance clubs. There are a number of alternative facilities available for hire at other locations locally, meaning there would be little or no loss of enrichment clubs or programmes for local families in the community.

6.5 In any community, the loss of a school, organisation or business would undoubtedly have an impact. Good schools engage parents in their children's education and reach out to the wider community for support, as well as providing community facilities. However, these must be considered as additional benefits to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its children. Numbers on roll, financial position and quality of education must be the considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close, this cannot be the overriding factor.

7. Rural primary schools

7.1 St Pancras is not designated as a rural primary school under the Department for Education's Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022. Therefore, the presumption against the closure of rural primary schools does not apply in this instance.

8. Balance of denominational provision

8.1 Currently in Lewes, there are 770 denominational school places in three schools and 630 non-denominational places in two schools. In the event that St Pancras closes, the number of denominational places in the town would reduce to 630 in two schools. There is a mix of denominational and non-denominational schools in the surrounding area to Lewes. All non-denominational state funded schools in England must provide collective worship of "a broadly Christian character".

8.2 There are currently seven Catholic primary schools in East Sussex. As set out in 9.1 below, although not in the immediate vicinity, there are alternative Catholic primary schools between seven and 11 miles away in East Sussex and across the border in Brighton and Hove.

8.3 Data provided by the diocese indicates that the average number of Catholic children admitted to Reception at St Pancras in the last five years is three per year. In May 2023, 23 of the 90 children on roll (26%) at St Pancras between Reception and Year 5 were Catholic (note: the number of Catholic children in the then Year 6 have not been included as they left the school in July 2023).

8.4 Since May 2023, a large proportion of the Catholic children have secured places in other schools, meaning that at the time of writing there are fewer than five Catholic children on roll at the school. It is acknowledged that there may be a small number of children whose families want them to attend a local Catholic school. However, weighted against the quality of education that St Pancras would be able to provide going forward it is considered not enough of an impediment to reconsider the closure proposal.

9. Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

9.1 There is no designated specialist provision for children with SEND at St Pancras. Data for the school at the May 2023 School Census, showed that the percentage of SEND pupils identified by the school was 30.5% (32 out of 105), including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), of which there were fewer than five. In comparison, the East Sussex average for SEND pupils in primary schools was 17.1%. The percentage of pupils at St Pancras with an EHCP was below the East Sussex average.

9.2 All schools have the same duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 to identify and provide for pupils with SEND. As the barriers to learning that a child with SEND might experience change over time, the local authority expects provision at a school to adapt and change alongside these developments.

9.3 In the event that St Pancras closes, the transition to new schools for the children would be managed very carefully with additional support to meet the identified needs of the children. The local authority recognises the additional challenges for staff, children, particularly those with SEND, and their families. It also recognises the potential impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing. For this reason, a team of professionals from the local authority (including the Education Psychology Service, SEN Practice and Standards and the Mental Health Support Team) have offered support to the school and would continue to provide help to staff, children and families in the period to 31 August 2024.

10. Travel

10.1 The distance from St Pancras to local schools is set out below. These are measured by the shortest available route in each case.

Table 7: Distances from St Pancras Catholic Primary School

School	Distance (miles)
Lewes schools	
South Malling CE Primary School	1.29
Southover CE Primary School	0.49
Wallands Community Primary School	0.47
Western Road Community Primary School	0.49
Surrounding rural schools	
Iford and Kingston CE Primary School	1.95
Hamsey Community Primary School	2.37
Firle CE Primary School	4.86
Catholic primary schools	
Anney Catholic Primary School, Seaford	11.02
St Philip's Catholic Primary School, Uckfield	8.55
Our Lady of Lourdes RC School, Brighton	8.11
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brighton	7.10

Source: East Sussex admissions database

10.2 As can be seen, all Lewes schools are within statutory walking distance from St Pancras. Distances to the closest surrounding rural schools and alternative Catholic schools varies. Most of these schools are well served by public transport.

10.3 Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils who meet the criteria set out in the local authority's school transport [policy](#).

11. Maintained nursery school

11.1 St Pancras does not have a maintained nursery; therefore, no consideration should be given to this factor.

12. Sixth form provision

12.1 As a primary school, there is no sixth form provision at St Pancras. Therefore, no consideration should be given to this factor.

13. Alternatives to closure

13.1 Prior to taking the decision to consult on closure, the governing board and the Diocese considered alternatives to closure, including federation and academisation. However, neither of these alternatives were deemed viable options. There were no local workable options for federation due to geography and, as set out in the original consultation document, the declining pupil numbers and impact on the budget make school the school less viable and affects its ability to join a multi academy trust.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

14.1 The Lead Member is required to have 'due regard' to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) in determining the proposal. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken to identify any equality implications of the proposal and to address any concerns through appropriate mitigations. The local authority considers the proposal to be a proportionate response to the issues that have arisen at St Pancras and is appropriate on the basis of concerns about the long-term viability of the school. It considers that all children impacted by the proposal, including those with protected characteristics, would be enabled to receive a good quality of education at an alternative school. All other schools in Lewes have an Ofsted rating of 'Good'. The local authority would work with local schools to put in place effective transition arrangements for all children.

14.2 The local authority does not consider that any other groups who share the protected characteristics, including any parents and carers or members of the local community who use the school, should be more affected by the proposal than any other. All potential impacts have been assessed and

appropriate mitigations set out in the EqlA. The EqlA is available to view in the Cabinet and Members' rooms at County Hall.

15. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

15.1 A small majority of families at the school who responded to the governing board's consultation (56%) support the proposal to close St Pancras. Parishioners and other interested parties are generally opposed to the proposal. Five responses were received during the representation period following the publication of the statutory proposal, raising comments and concerns about the proposal.

15.2 While recognising the nature of objections to the proposal, the local authority believes the case for the closure of St Pancras is strong for the following reasons.

- Due to the surplus places in the area, the school has struggled for a number of years to be full.
- Surplus places in Lewes remain high. The local authority is confident there would be sufficient school places available in the area for children displaced from St Pancras on 31 August 2024. Pupil forecasts indicate that the situation in the area is unlikely to change markedly in the coming years.
- The low pupil numbers, and the impact on the budget, limit the school's capacity to improve the quality of education that it can provide.
- The governing board and the diocese have brought forward the proposal and are supportive of closure.

15.3 Having carefully considered the feedback received during the initial consultation and the subsequent representation period, the local authority has concluded that St Pancras can no longer be considered viable.

15.4 The Regulations set out the options the decision-maker has when making a decision on a closure proposal. The decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification, as specified in regulation 16 of the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations.

15.5 For the reasons set out in the report, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024 without modifications or conditions to the closure proposal.

ALISON JEFFERY
Director of Children's Services

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Email: gary.langford@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Wendy Maples
Councillor Johnny Denis

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Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **14 November 2023**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027**

Purpose of report: **To approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027.

1. Background

1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand across East Sussex. In support of this duty, the local authority publishes a School Organisation Plan ("the plan") annually. The plan sets out the projected demand for primary, secondary, and special school places in the future and where East Sussex County Council ("the local authority") thinks it will need to commission additional places or reorganise existing provision to maintain a sustainable network of schools with the right number of places in the right locations to serve local need.

1.2 The current plan, covering the period 2022 to 2026, was approved for publication by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability ("the Lead Member") on 17 October 2022. A new draft plan covering the period 2023 to 2027 has been produced using the most recent set of pupil forecasts which take account of factors such as the latest information on births, GP registrations, parental preferences, housing developments and migration patterns. The draft plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

2. East Sussex context

2.1 The draft plan describes how births in East Sussex, which peaked at around 5,500 in academic year 2010/11, have fallen to below 4,400 in 2021/22. As a result, we have seen a fall in Reception intake numbers in primary schools, which are forecast to generally keep falling until at least 2026/27. At the May 2023 school census, 21 primary schools in East Sussex had 25% or more surplus places.

2.2 Our pupil forecasts show numbers recovering in future years, however, intake forecasts beyond 2026/27 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data. Looking at previous cycles of births and Year R intakes, it is very possible that we may not see a recovery in Reception numbers until later in the decade. In areas of the county such as Hailsham and Bexhill, where high volumes of new housing are planned, Reception numbers may rise sooner than in other parts of East Sussex.

2.3 Previous high numbers in primary schools have been reflected in rising Year 7 secondary school intakes in recent years. It is possible that Year 7 numbers may have peaked in 2022/23 and will now start to gradually decline. Total numbers on roll in secondary schools are expected to peak around 2025/26. Currently, only three secondary schools have 25% or more surplus places.

2.4 In 2022/23, the number of school aged children and young people (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) stood at 3,713. There were also 530 young people aged 19-25 with an EHCP who need continued support to transition to adulthood. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the local authority saw a 46% increase in the number of new EHCPs being issued when compared to the previous 12 months.

2.5 Over the next four years, the local authority forecasts that overall numbers of school aged children and young people with EHCPs will grow by around 32%, to stand at approximately 4,900.

2.6 To meet this growing need, the local authority is exploring opportunities for more special school provision in the county. We have also identified a need for more specialist provision for post-16 learners and will be exploring with current special schools and providers how this can be best delivered. Where appropriate, the local authority would also like to see more children and young people with EHCPs supported in their local mainstream schools where a child's needs could be met in a specialist facility that includes suitable access to mainstream provision. With this in mind, we are currently considering opportunities to expand existing specialist facilities and establish new specialist facilities at mainstream primary and secondary schools

3. Conclusions and reasons for recommendation

3.1 In conclusion, the local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand across East Sussex. The draft School Organisation Plan for the period 2023 to 2027 sets out how the local authority seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary and special school places in the right locations to meet demand.

3.2 Accordingly, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027.

ALISON JEFFERY

Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Gary Langford, Place Planning Manager

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027

East Sussex County Council

School Organisation Plan

2023 to 2027



EDUCATION
EAST SUSSEX
TOGETHER FOR EXCELLENCE
AND INCLUSION



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Executive summary

The School Organisation Plan, which covers the period 2023 to 2027, is a 4-year rolling plan that is updated annually. It sets out how East Sussex County Council (the local authority), in accordance with its statutory duty, seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary and special school places in the right locations to meet demand.

The document contains information on:

- the current pattern of school provision across the county.
- forecasts of future school numbers.
- our plans to meet the need for additional places in areas of growth.
- our plans to address the over-supply of places in areas with falling rolls.

The need for school places fluctuates in response to population changes, new housing developments and government policy and can lead to rising as well as declining pupil numbers. Increases in demand can lead to the establishment of new schools or the expansion of existing schools. Decreases in demand can lead to a reduction in places through changes to admission arrangements or the rationalisation of provision.

The purpose of the School Organisation Plan is to share the projected demand for school places in the future and to set out where we think we will need to commission additional places or re-organise existing provision. It is a contextual document, providing the framework within which proposals for change may be brought forward. Any reviews of education provision we undertake and any recommendations for school re-organisation (for example opening, closing, amalgamating, enlarging, or contracting of schools) will, in part, be based on information contained in the plan.

Over the plan period there will continue to be areas of growing demand for school places, primarily linked to the rising number of children and young people with an Education, Health, and Care Plan. However, there will also be areas with a declining demand, including in the rural areas of East Sussex. Some schools will face challenges associated with falling rolls which can create budget pressures and impact on decisions of school leadership and organisation.

We work closely with local planning authorities, developers, school leaders, governors, academy trusts, the Diocese of Chichester and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton to ensure there are the right numbers of school places in the right locations, with the aim of providing a high quality and inclusive education for all children and young people in East Sussex. Alongside our statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand, we are responsible for promoting a good supply of places at strong schools through planning, organising, and commissioning places in a way that raises attainment, increases diversity, encourages collaboration between schools and promotes community cohesion.

The introduction of the Academies Act in 2010 makes it possible for all maintained schools to become academies. On 1 September 2023 there were 79 academies in East Sussex (42% of all schools). All new schools to have been established in East Sussex since 2010 have opened as an academy in line with government policy.



Hailsham Community College

Policies and strategies

The School Organisation Plan is one of several policies and strategies that relate to wider education provision in East Sussex. Others include:

Excellence for All

[Excellence for All](#) sets out our vision to improve outcomes for all children and young people in East Sussex.

Our partnership infrastructure remains the key local mechanism for delivering the shared ambitions set out in the Excellence for All strategy. We continue to work collaboratively to build capacity for improvement, drive innovation and ensure the very best education for our children and young people.

Alongside the ambitions and priorities set out in Excellence for All, the Primary Board and the Secondary Board set out their vision each year:

‘We share a collective responsibility to improve outcomes for all young people in East Sussex. Our ambition is to become an excellent school system with no child or school/academy left behind, where all young people receive a high quality of education and are prepared for success in life whatever they choose to do’.

Admission arrangements

All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements are determined by admissions authorities. East Sussex County Council is the admissions authority for community schools and voluntary controlled church schools. The governing boards of voluntary aided church schools, trust schools, academies and free schools set the admissions criteria for their individual school(s).

Parents and carers have the right to express a preference for a school, which is not the same as choosing the school where their child will attend. Parents and carers in East

Sussex are invited to indicate up to 3 preferences when applying for a school place for their child.

For September 2023, the local authority was able to offer a place at a preferred school to 98.5% of primary reception (Year R) applicants, 98.7% of junior Year 3 applicants and 97% of secondary Year 7 applicants. There is more information about [applying for a school place on the on the local authority website](#).

Childcare Sufficiency Duty

The [Childcare Sufficiency Duty](#) is a statutory annual report presented to the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability. It reports on the sufficiency of childcare and the state of the childcare market across East Sussex.

We have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). We also have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient early learning places for all eligible two, three and four year-olds.

A new Childcare Sufficiency Duty report for 2024/25 will be published in early 2024 and will take account of the expansion of the current Early Years Education entitlement funding streams being implemented from April 2024.

East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2022-25

In November 2022 a new, ambitious East Sussex SEND strategy was launched covering the period 2022 to 2025. This sets out the shared ambitions we aim to achieve across education, health, and social care over the next three years for children and young people with SEND.

The Strategy outlines a joint approach to service provision and commissioning by putting children and young people, and their families at the centre of decision-making.

The SEND Strategy has been developed by representatives from across the local authority, health services and education providers, informed by the voices of young people, parents and carers.

You can view the [East Sussex SEND Strategy here](#).

Post-16 education and training

Local authorities have statutory duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. Specifically, these duties are:

- to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is maintained. This is a duty under the Education Act 1996. To fulfil this duty, local authorities need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.
- to make available to all young people aged 13-19 and those up to 25 with an EHCP, support that will encourage, enable, or assist them to participate in education or training under Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008.
- tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties, as is promoting effective participation.

The post-16 offer should meet the requirements of increasing participation, by offering a wide range of options with clear progression routes into further or higher education or employment with training. The post-16 offer should also reflect the local skills needs and priority sectors of East Sussex, with a curriculum plan and progression pathways which are influenced by local employers.

The growth of the East Sussex economy is a key strategic priority and the strategic board for skills, [Skills East Sussex](#), helps drive this work through a strong partnership of local employers, post-16 education, training providers and schools. This includes a focus on securing good quality careers advice through local [East Sussex Careers Hub](#) activities, embedding the Enterprise Advisors Network, the provision of [Careers East Sussex](#); an e-prospectus and online application platform, a Work Experience Service for schools and

the commissioning of a Youth Employability Service to provide support for young people who are not in education, employment or training or at risk of not being so.

National framework

For more information about the national framework within which local authorities must work in relation to education provision and school planning, please refer to the [Department for Education website](#).



The local perspective

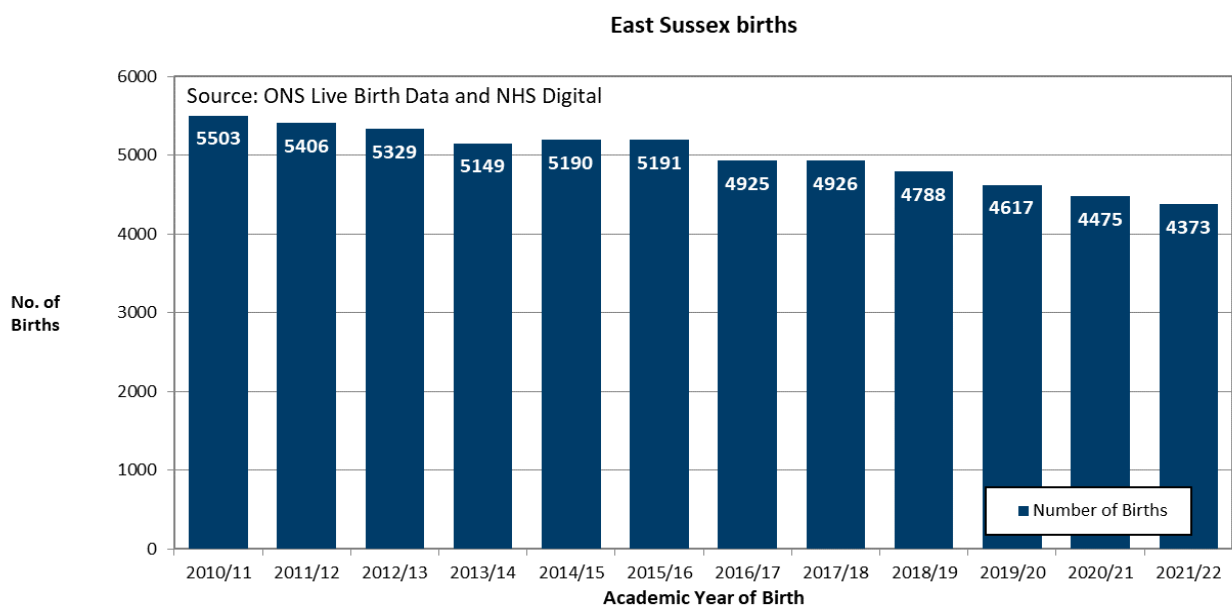
Population

The overall population in East Sussex has grown steadily, rising from 492,000 in 2001 to 546,000 in 2021 (Source: 2001 and 2021 Censuses).

Around three quarters of the population live in urban areas (Source: 2011 Census). The main centres of population and employment are concentrated in the southern coastal strip of the county in Eastbourne, Hastings and St Leonard's, Bexhill, Newhaven, Seaford, and Lewes.

The picture for East Sussex as a whole is of an ageing county. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is forecast to rise from 26% in 2020 to 28% in 2025 and 30% by 2030 (Source: ESCC Policy Based Population Projections April 2022).

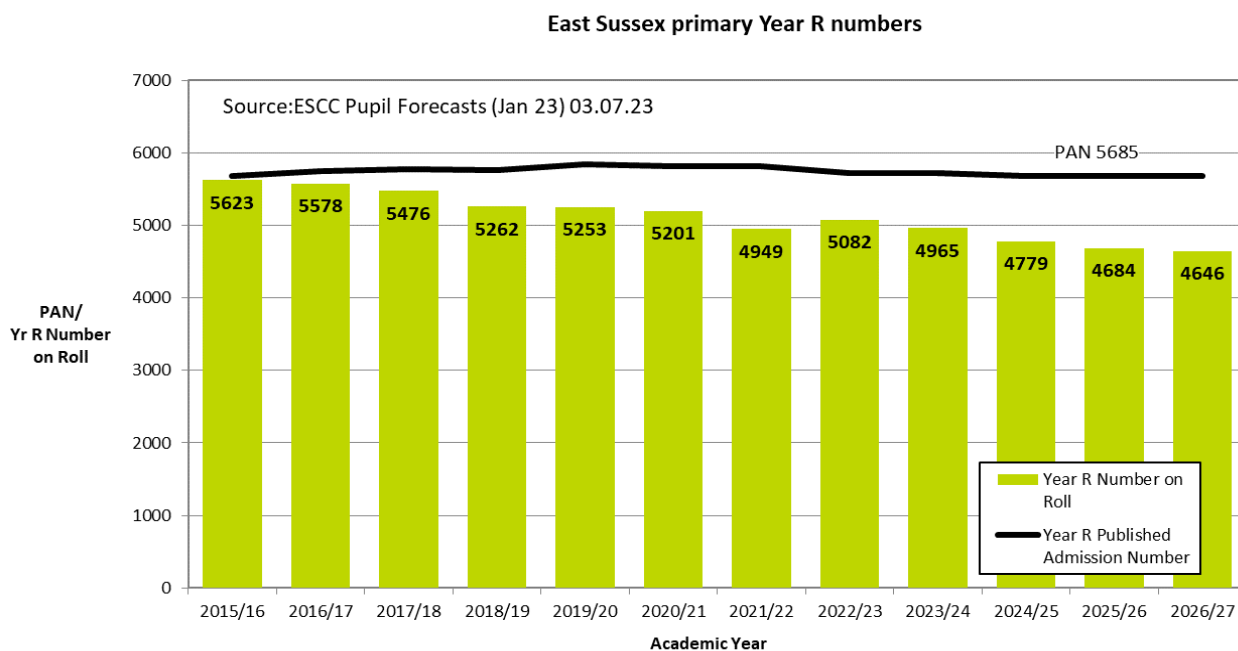
Births in East Sussex peaked at around 5,500 in academic year 2010/11. Since then, countywide births have fallen to below 4,400 in 2021/22, although the 2021/22 birth totals are provisional and subject to revision. Based on historic patterns of 11-13 year cycles of peaks and troughs, it is anticipated that birth numbers will begin to recover soon, but it is not clear whether 2021/22 marks the lowest point in the cycle.



Pupil numbers

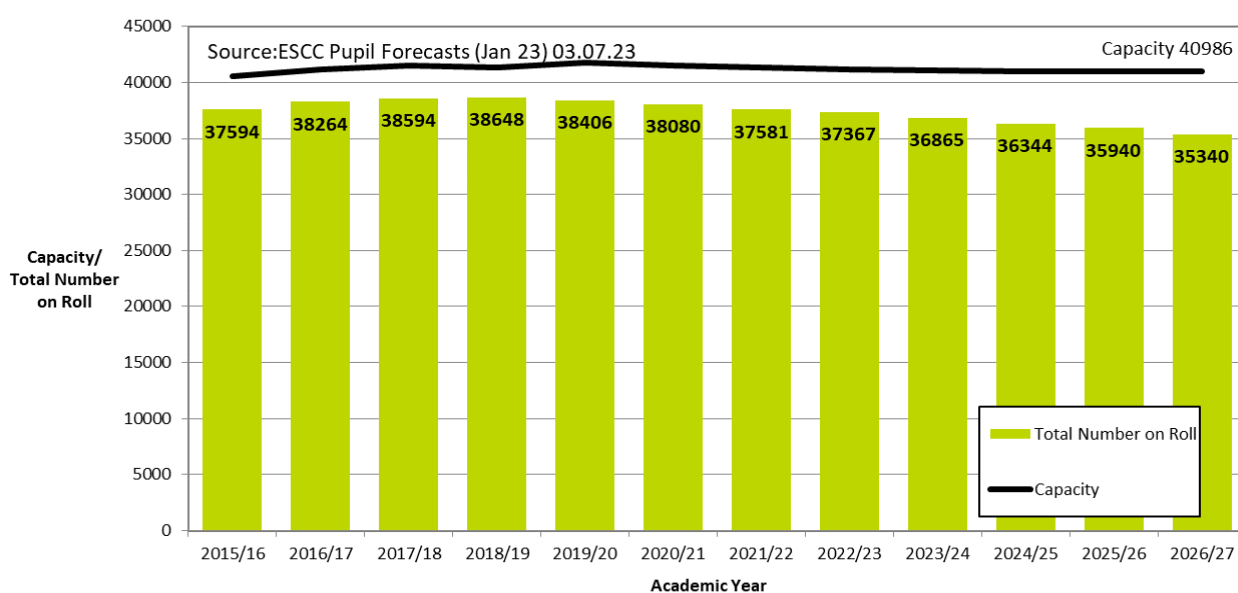
The fall in countywide births is reflected in falling primary reception (Year R) intake numbers, which are forecast to generally fall in coming years, at least until 2026/27. The local authority's pupil forecasting model is showing numbers recovering beyond this point. However, intake forecasts beyond 2026/27 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data. Looking at previous cycles of births and reception intakes, it is very possible that we may not see a recovery in Year R numbers until later in the decade and high Year R numbers across the county generally until the 2030s.

In areas of the county such as Hailsham and Bexhill, where high volumes of new housing have been built/are planned, Year R numbers may rise sooner than in other parts of East Sussex.



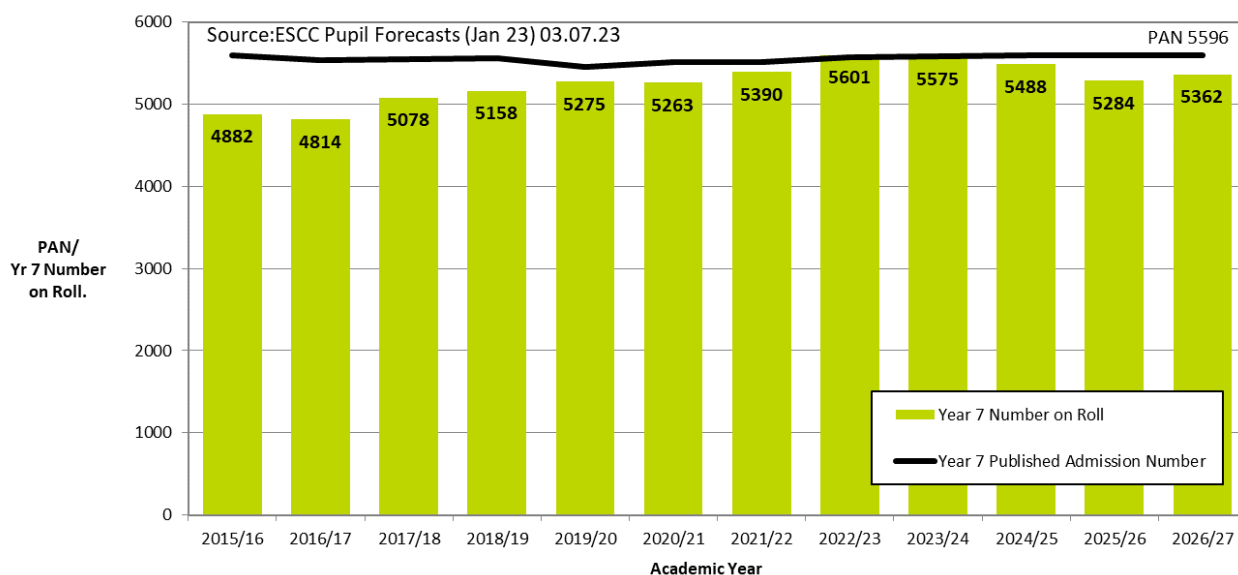
Total numbers on roll in primary schools peaked in 2018/19 and are now in decline. In 2022/23 surplus places overall were 9% of capacity, although this margin varies from area to area. By 2026/27, overall surplus places are forecast to increase to 14% of capacity.

East Sussex total primary numbers

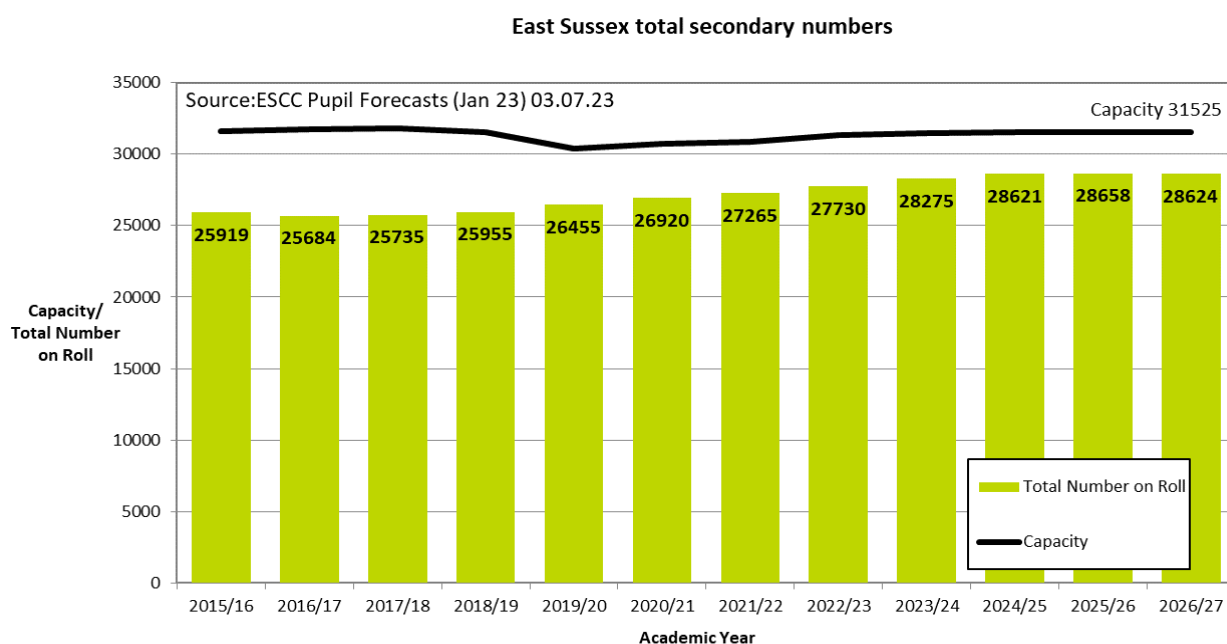


Earlier high numbers in primary schools have been reflected in rising secondary Year 7 school intakes in recent years. It is possible that Year 7 numbers may have peaked in 2022/23 and will now start to gradually decline.

East Sussex secondary Year 7 numbers



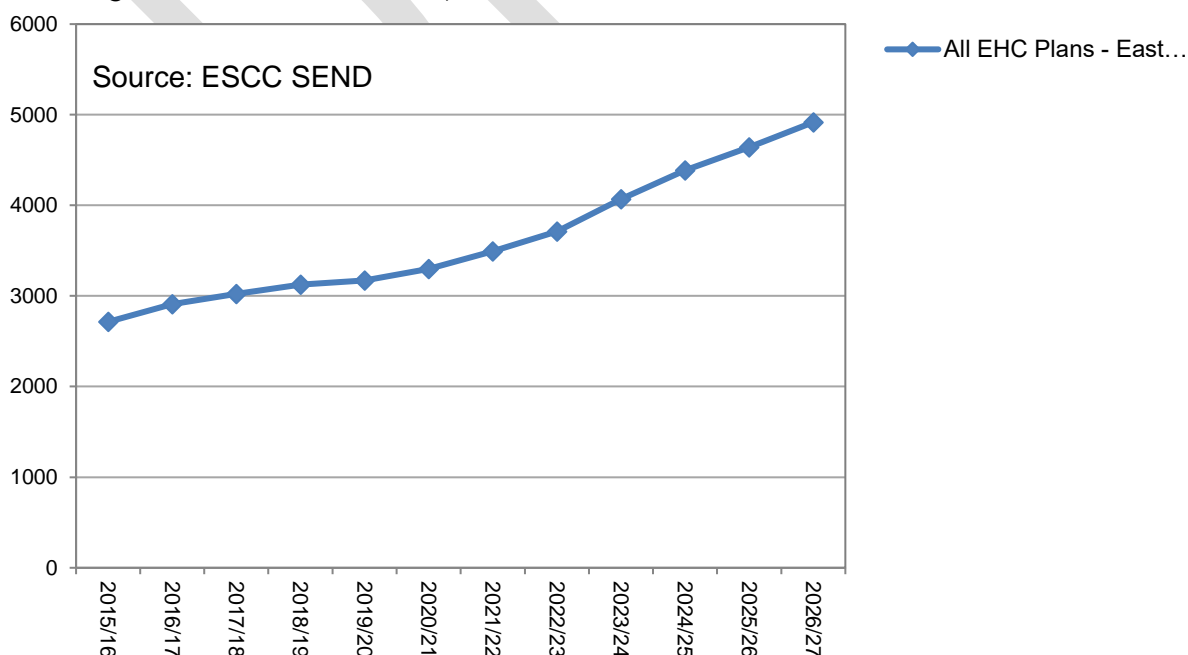
Total numbers on roll in secondary schools are expected to peak around 2025/26. Overall surplus places, at 12% countywide in 2022/23, are predicted to reduce to 9% by 2026/27.



In 2022/23, the number of school aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) stood at 3,713. There were also 530 young people aged 19-25 with an EHCP who need continued support to transition to adulthood. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the local authority saw a 46% increase in the number of new EHCPs being issued when compared to the previous 12 months.

Over the next four years, the local authority forecasts that overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs will grow by around 32%, to stand at approximately 4,900.

School age children with Education, Health and Care Plans



Cross-border movement

At primary school level (across all year groups) East Sussex imports around 400 children from the neighbouring authorities of Kent, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove and exports approximately 900 children to these same authorities.

At secondary school level (across all year groups) East Sussex imports approximately 700 children from the neighbouring authorities of Kent, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove and exports approximately 1,500 children to these same authorities. Kent Grammar schools represent a particular 'pull factor' for East Sussex children.

Schools in East Sussex

On 1 September 2023 there were 174 state funded mainstream schools and 15 special schools and alternative provisions in East Sussex. These range from local authority-maintained schools to academies and free schools. The following table provides a breakdown of the different types of school in East Sussex.

School Type	Community	Voluntary Controlled	Voluntary Aided	Foundation	Academy (inc free school)	Totals
Infant (4-7)	3	1			3	7
Junior (7-11)	2				4	6
Primary (4-11)	34	39	20	2	40	135
All-through (4-16/18)					3	3
Secondary (11-16/18)	6		1	1	15	23
Special	1				12	13
Alternative provision					2	2
Totals	46	40	21	3	79	189

Note:

Some primary and all-through schools include nursery provision and therefore have age ranges starting at 2 or 3.

Some all-through and secondary schools include sixth form provision and therefore have age ranges to 18.

- There are 110 local authority-maintained schools in East Sussex and 79 academies and free schools. Of the maintained schools, 46 are community schools, 61 are church schools and three are foundation schools.

- Of the 79 academies, 76 are part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) while three are single academy trusts (SATs).
- Of the 61 local authority-maintained church schools, 40 are voluntary controlled and 21 are voluntary aided. Of the voluntary aided schools, 13 are Church of England and eight are Catholic. A number of academies are also church schools.
- There are 13 formal federations in East Sussex made up of 33 primary schools.
- According to the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022, 61 of the 135 primary schools in the county (45%) are classified as rural. The 13 linked infant and junior schools are all located in urban areas, mainly Eastbourne.
- There are specialist facilities at 19 mainstream schools in East Sussex (nine primary and ten secondary), catering for primary needs such as autism, speech language and communication needs, moderate learning disability and physical disability.

For more information on where schools are located in the county please refer to [about schools in East Sussex](#) on the local authority website.



Ropemakers Academy, Hailsham

School organisation in East Sussex

Introduction

This section sets out the local authority's approach to school organisation, to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand.

The guiding principles underlying our approach are:

- to ensure that schools are of the right size and in the right location to meet local demand for places.
- to ensure that school provision is sustainable and is well placed to deliver a high-quality education that meets the needs of their local communities and makes best use of public funding.
- to support the amalgamation of linked infant and junior schools that delivers the benefit of continuous provision from early years to the end of Key Stage 2.
- to ensure any change to school organisation impacts positively on school performance and on the life chances of children and young people.
- to ensure any review of school organisation enables stakeholders to engage fully and effectively in the process.

School planning areas

For school planning purposes, East Sussex is split into:

- 18 primary school planning areas which closely reflect school admissions areas. For the purposes of the plan, rural primary schools (which tend to be single school admission areas) have been grouped together under the headings of 'Rural Lewes', 'Rural Rother' and 'Rural Wealden' or have been linked with a nearby town.
- 16 secondary school planning areas which closely reflect school admissions areas. Many secondary school admissions areas relate to a single school. In Eastbourne, where the single school boundaries are complex and overlapping, six secondary schools (including two all-through schools) have been grouped together for school planning purposes. Three secondary schools make up the Hastings planning area. There are two secondary schools in the Havens planning area. The Bexhill

planning area contains two schools, one of which (a Catholic school) has a much wider catchment area than the town.

We work closely with local planning authorities in East Sussex on the production of their Local Plan documents. This planning process identifies the requirement for additional school places arising from new housing development. It is anticipated that, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements, new housing developments will contribute to the cost of providing additional school places to serve the development and, where necessary, provide land on which to build new schools.

Pupil forecasting

In producing forecasts of future demand for primary and secondary places, we consider factors such as:

- current numbers on roll in each academic year group
- births
- trend data (e.g., on how year group numbers change as cohorts move through schools)
- parental preference
- school admissions policies
- housing growth
- existing and planned capacity
- patterns of inward and outward migration.

The forecasts within this document provide a comprehensive account of predicted future trends in numbers and the areas of the county where pressures on places are most likely to occur. However, pupil forecasting is complex and, as a result, is not an exact science. For example, it is not always possible to predict changes in local demand for school places owing to swings in parental preference, changing migration patterns or revisions to planned local housing targets. Pupil forecasts are updated annually, and exceptions identified to manage the risk of under/over-supply of school places.

Based on the January 2023 actual numbers on roll our primary pupil forecasts are accurate to -1.0% one year ahead and 0.3% three years ahead. Our secondary pupil

forecasts are accurate to 0.6% one year ahead and 2.2% three years ahead. We have a track record of accurate forecasting, derived from sound methodology and the accuracy of our forecasts compare well to other local authorities.

It is important to note that while the local authority seeks to meet parental preference, our projections are primarily concerned with ensuring we have sufficient places in each area. It may be the case that some schools in an area that are consistently oversubscribed give the impression that there is a shortage of places when this is not the case overall as other schools in that area have capacity. The principal factor for school planning is the number of places in an area compared to the number of children requiring a place and it is this that the local authority seeks to predict and respond to.

The local authority's special educational needs and disability (SEND) forecasting model predicts future numbers of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and numbers in maintained and independent non-maintained special schools. The forecasts take account of the following factors:

- demographic trends
- the prevalence of different types of SEND (as defined by primary need) in the population
- recent trends in prevalence rates (e.g., EHCPs per 10,000 population in a given age bracket)
- professional judgement from SEND practitioners as to whether these trends are likely to continue in the future.

Academisation

The introduction of the Academies Act in 2010 makes it possible for all maintained schools to become academies. On 1 September 2023 there were 79 academies in East Sussex (42% of all schools). All new schools to have been established in East Sussex since 2010 have opened as an academy in line with government policy.

Of the 79 academies in East Sussex:

- three are infant schools (43% of the total number of infant schools in East Sussex)
- four are junior schools (67%)
- 40 are primary schools (30%)
- three are all-through schools (100%)
- 15 are secondary schools (65%)
- 14 are special schools and alternative provisions (93%).

76 academies (96%) are part of a multi academy trust (MAT), with three (4%) belonging to a single academy trust (SAT).

At the May 2023 school census, 54% of pupils in East Sussex were on roll in an academy:

- 15,743 primary school pupils (41%)
- 4,216 all-through school pupils (100%)
- 15,596 secondary school pupils (64%)
- 1,185 special school (excluding alternative provision) pupils (90%).

The local authority has a duty to facilitate academy conversions, as set out in the Academies Act 2010, 5b: *'Where an Academy order under section 4(A1) or (1)(b) has effect in respect of a school, the governing body of the school and the local authority must take all reasonable steps to facilitate the conversion of the school into an Academy.'*

The Education White Paper 'Opportunity for All' was published on 23 March 2022, the White Paper set out the government's aim that *'by 2030 all children will be taught in a family of schools that are in a strong MAT or plan to join one.'* The White Paper proposed to bring in new powers to enable local authorities to apply for an academy order for one of their schools through new legalisation in 'The Schools Bill'. The Schools Bill was withdrawn from its process through parliament in December 2022. Whilst the ambition of the government is for all schools to become academies there are no new legal powers to facilitate this.

The local authority worked with the Primary and Secondary Boards to agree a joint strategic approach on how academisation can support our shared ambition to create a

strong school system in the county that will deliver improved and sustained outcomes for children and young people. The local authority has set out, jointly with the Boards, our belief that strong trusts with the right leadership, accountability and capacity to support improvement have a critical part to play in building this system, although we also believe there are other forms of partnerships which with the right governance and accountability can do the same e.g., federations.

East Sussex has been identified by the Department for Education (DfE) as an Education Investment Area (EIA). As an EIA the area is prioritised for developing an education system led by high-quality trusts to transform underperforming schools within the area. The DfE published a [trust development statement](#) for East Sussex in March 2023 setting out the priorities for trust development within the area. These priorities are consistent with the principles we have agreed locally.

Creating new places

When the local authority identifies a shortfall of capacity it will consider providing additional school places, either through the expansion of existing schools or through commissioning new schools. The local authority welcomes proposals from existing schools to expand and from interested parties keen to establish new provision to relieve pressure on places.

The local authority will consult with key stakeholders when developing proposals to provide new places. When considering proposals to add new places to meet demand the local authority will take account of the following principles:

- prioritise the expansion of good and outstanding schools
- consider the pattern of parental preference and local demand for places
- consider the diversity of provision
- consider transport patterns to reduce travel times to schools wherever possible
- consider safe routes to schools
- where there is demand for both school and early years places, the local authority will consider providing additional accommodation designed to ensure a seamless transition between nursery and reception (Year R)
- support new free schools where their location will help relieve pressure on places

- where possible, only enlarge schools where it creates or sustains round forms of entry as the preferred model of organisation
- ensure value for money.

Whilst it would be desirable for every child to be educated in permanent school buildings, the local authority must be certain there is a long term need before we provide additional permanent school places. This is to ensure we do not add surplus capacity to the system which may then create viability issues in times of low pupil numbers. If the need is considered short term, the local authority will generally use temporary classrooms which provide a valuable and flexible resource and are an appropriate way of providing school places for a short period of time.

Capital funding

The local authority receives Basic Need capital funding from the government to support the creation of primary and secondary school places. This funding is provided on a formulaic basis using information provided by the local authority to the Department for Education in the annual School Capacity return. The local authority also receives High Needs Provision capital funding to support the delivery of new provision for children and young people with SEND.

The capital funding that the local authority receives from the government is insufficient to cover the entire capital costs of new build and expansion projects and the local authority must supplement the funding provided from other sources, including its own capital programme.

In areas where pressure on school places comes from new housing developments, the local authority works closely with local planning authorities to secure financial contributions towards the cost of providing additional school places through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL is a charge which can be levied by local planning authorities on new development in their area. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area.

In some instances, the local authority can also secure development contributions through the negotiation of Section 106 agreements. Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between local authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations. In recent years, the local authority has been successful in securing funding from Section 106 agreements and the CIL towards the provision of school places.

Surplus places

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a school planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts.

A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

“It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools”.

This figure is deemed to give the appropriate amount of flexibility in an area and is set against the need to ensure the efficient use of resources. In practice, the number of surplus places planned for in an area will also take account of local circumstances.

At the May 2023 school census, 21 primary schools in East Sussex had 25% or more surplus places. This reflects the falling reception (Year R) intake numbers being seen across the county. Conversely, with secondary school intake (Year 7) numbers at their peak, only three secondary schools had 25% or more surplus places.

Reviews of provision

Low pupil numbers can lead to a school facing financial challenges. The impact of these financial challenges is often more acute in small rural schools due to the characteristics of rural communities; low birth rates and in-area demand for places which can vary noticeably from one year to another. Fluctuating pupil numbers are difficult to manage and can lead to irregular class sizes and inefficient staff to pupil ratios. Smaller schools tend to have a higher proportion of their budget allocated to fixed costs than larger schools and, as such, have less flexibility to respond to cost pressures, unexpected events, and deficit recovery.

In undertaking its statutory duty, the local authority has a responsibility to consider the organisation of school places to create a sustainable network of schools across the county. In certain circumstances, rationalisation of provision can benefit schools by reducing surplus places in an area so that the remaining schools can operate more efficiently with more certainty over their pupil numbers.

To support this, the local authority regularly monitors pupil numbers in each of its school planning areas to ensure the current arrangement for the organisation of schools is appropriate.

In addition to the ongoing monitoring process, there may be times when the local authority wishes to conduct a more detailed review of a specific school/s and/or a specific geographical area. This review could be conducted where there is significant change in circumstances that could impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of a school/s. Examples of significant change in circumstances might include:

- the position of a headteacher becomes unexpectedly vacant
- a school is placed in an Ofsted category of inadequate
- a school has remained in an Ofsted category of requires improvement for the last two inspections
- a school becomes eligible for intervention by the local authority
- a school faces significant financial challenges and is unable to create a viable recovery plan.

Any reviews of education provision the local authority undertakes and any recommendations for school re-organisation will, in part, be based on information contained in this document. Many schools in East Sussex are church schools, being voluntary controlled or voluntary aided, and therefore, the Diocese of Chichester and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton would be key partners in any review alongside a school's governing board.

Academy trusts may wish to consider the information in this document when considering the organisation of school places within their trust. If any trust is contemplating a change to their current organisation (expansion or reduction in provision) we would encourage them to contact the local authority at the outset to discuss their proposals. This will ensure that any plans align with the local authority's wider statutory duty around school places.

The following sections describe the current situation in each school planning area. They set out how we expect pupil numbers to change during the plan period and what action the local authority is planning to take to address any shortfalls or surpluses in capacity or any organisational change. The information is subject to revision and review as new data (for example, on live births) becomes available or local planning authorities' housing targets and trajectories are amended.

The capacity information provided in the charts in each school planning area is based on either the local authority's net capacity assessment of each maintained school or, for academies, the capacity figure stated in each academy's funding agreement.

Eastbourne

Schools

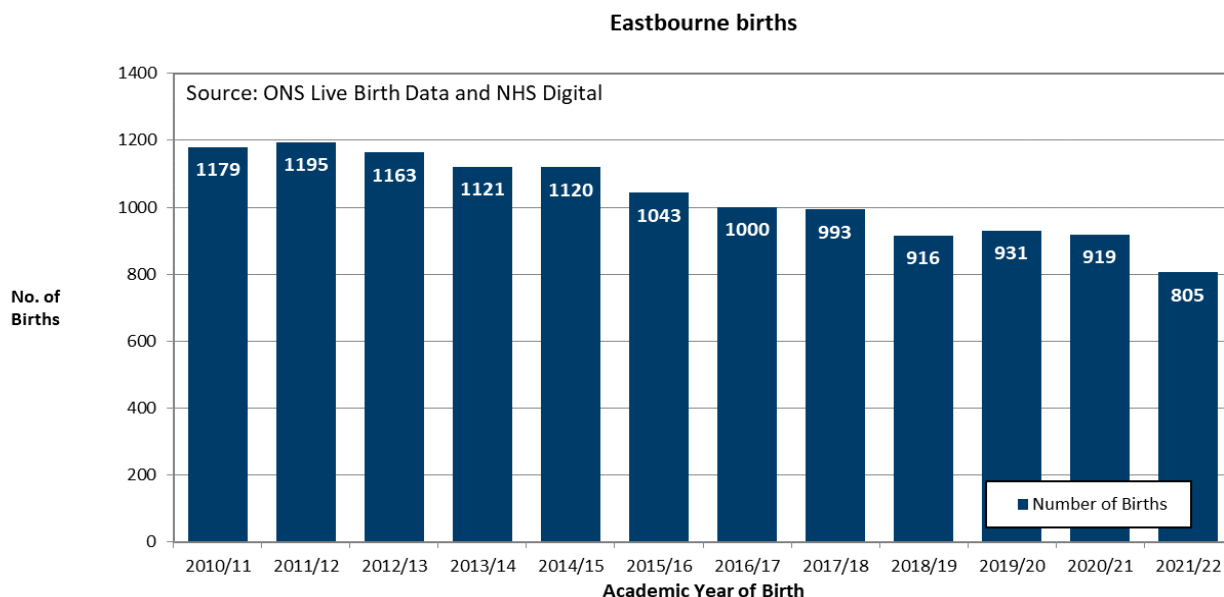
There are 19 primary schools in the area, six of which are infant schools and five are junior schools. There are two all-through schools (primary and secondary) and four secondary schools. Five schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary schools		
Bourne Primary School	3-11	Community
Heron Park Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Langney Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Motcombe Infants' School	4-7	Community
Oakwood Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
Ocklynge Junior School	7-11	Academy
Parkland Infant School	4-7	Academy
Parkland Junior School	7-11	Academy
Pashley Down Infant School	4-7	Community
Roselands Infants' School	4-7	Academy
Shinewater Primary School	3-11	Academy
St Andrew's Church of England Infants School	4-7	Voluntary Controlled
St John's Meads Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
St Thomas A Becket Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Stafford Junior School	7-11	Academy
The Haven Church of England Methodist Primary School	4-11	Academy
Tollgate Community Junior School	7-11	Community
West Rise Community Infant School	4-7	Community
West Rise Junior School	7-11	Community
All-through schools		
Gildredge House	4-19	Academy
The Cavendish School	2-16	Academy
Secondary schools		
Ratton School	11-16	Academy
St Catherine's College	11-16	Academy
The Eastbourne Academy	11-16	Academy
The Turing School	11-16	Academy

* School type correct on 1 September 2023

Births

Births in Eastbourne continue to fall from a peak of 1,195 in 2011/12.



Housing plans

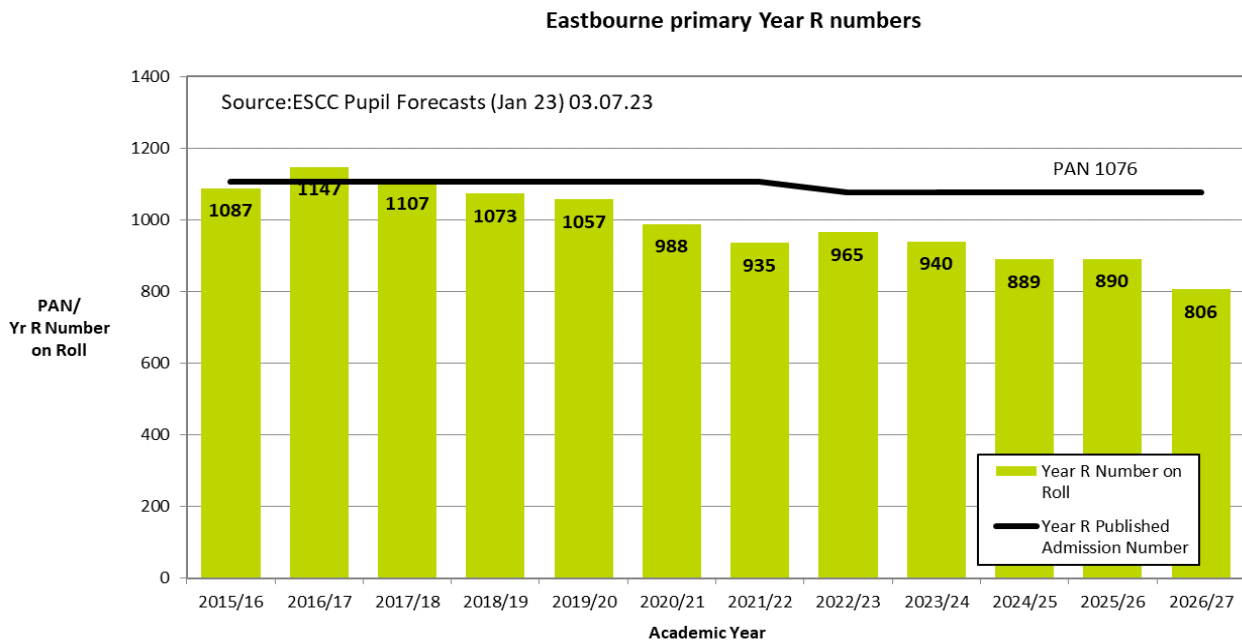
Eastbourne Borough Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 1,600 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2026/27. Eastbourne Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in Eastbourne may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

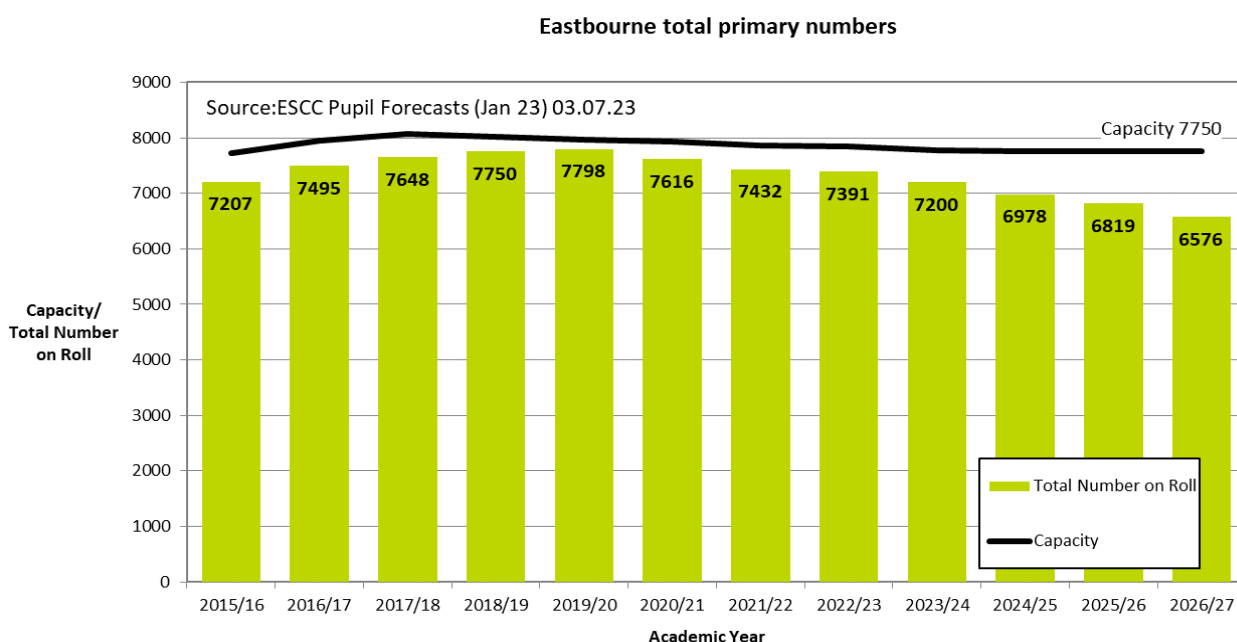
In line with the falling births in Eastbourne, the local authority anticipates that Reception (Year R) intakes in the town will generally fall away until towards the end of the decade.

Many Eastbourne children attend schools in the surrounding area including Polegate Primary School and Willingdon Primary School, Stone Cross School, Hankham Primary School and Pevensey and Westham CE Primary School.

The majority of these schools are full or close to full. High levels of new housing (recent and planned) will put additional pressure on places at these schools. The permanent expansion of Polegate Primary School from 420 places to 630 places from 2019/20 has helped to alleviate these pressures. Nevertheless, rising in-area numbers are likely to result in some demand from Eastbourne children being redirected by the school admissions system into the town.



Falling intakes will have a knock-on effect on total numbers on roll. Surplus places, which stood at 5% in 2022/23, are predicted to rise rapidly to around 15% by 2026/27. Three schools in the area have 25% or more surplus places.



Two of the three schools with significant surplus places are academies. Therefore, a decision on reducing the Published Admission Number (PAN) at either or both schools to manage surplus places rests with the academy trust. The local authority reduced the PAN at Motcombe Infants School from 120 to 90 with effect from the 2022/23 academic year to help manage surplus places in the school. Accommodation has not been removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers start to rise again.

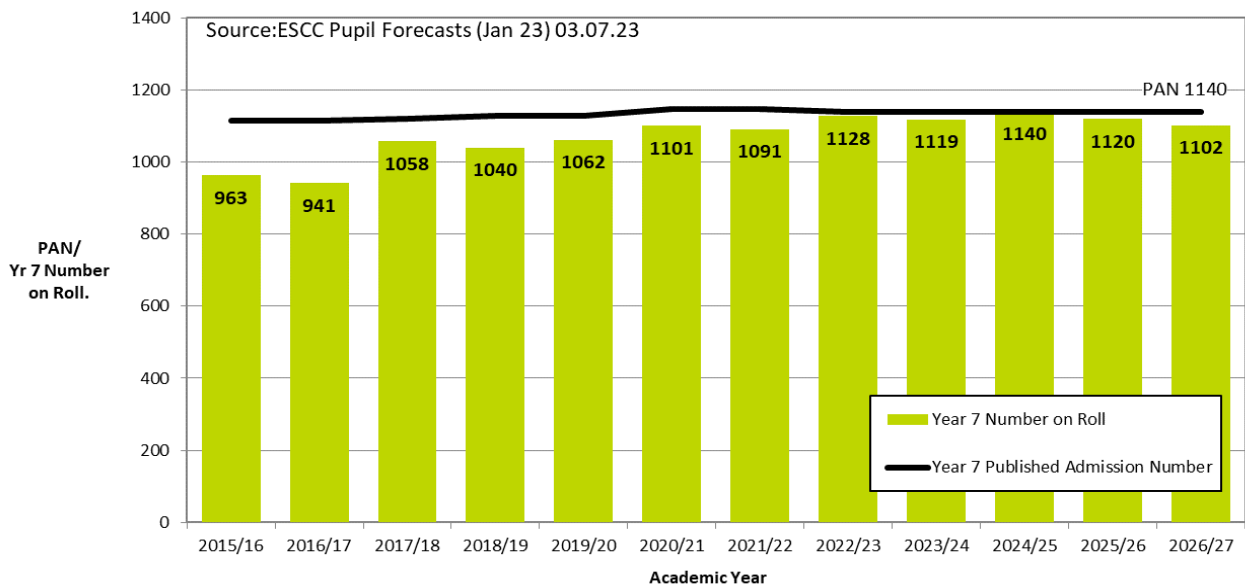
Secondary places

Based on the numbers coming through primary schools, intakes into Year 7 are forecast to remain high until at least 2025/26. A small shortfall against PAN is currently forecast for 2023/24 and might be possible again in 2024/25.

From 2026/27 or 2027/28, Year 7 numbers in Eastbourne are likely to fall away, leaving increasing numbers of spare places.

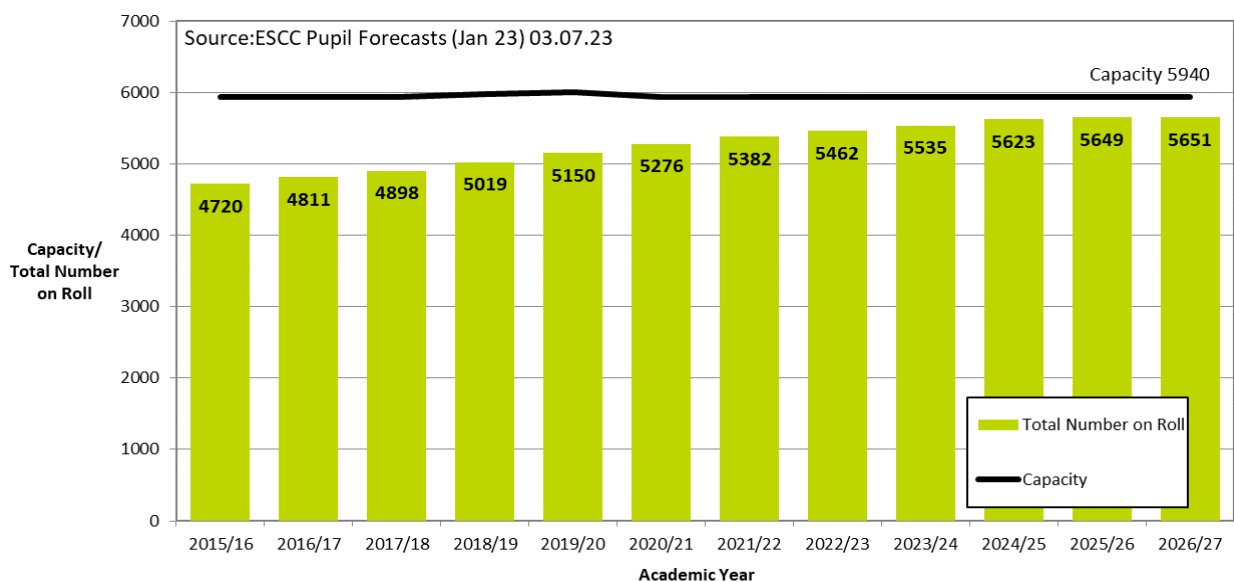
The Eastbourne area sees outflows of Catholic children to St Richard's Catholic College in Bexhill and some inflows from Bexhill and Hailsham. There are also significant inflows from and outflows to Willingdon Community School.

Eastbourne secondary Year 7 numbers



In line with larger Year 7 intakes, total secondary numbers in the Eastbourne schools have been rising and are expected to reach around 5,650 by 2026/27. As a result, surplus places in the area are likely to fall from 8% in 2022/23 to 5% by the end of the plan period. One school in the area has 25% or more surplus places. However, with Year 7 intakes currently high, this may fall below 25% as early as 2023/24.

Eastbourne total secondary numbers



The local authority has worked closely with Willingdon Community School on a strategy to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the wider Eastbourne and Willingdon area to

accommodate the high Year 7 numbers. Please refer to the Polegate and Willingdon planning area for more details.



Hastings

Schools

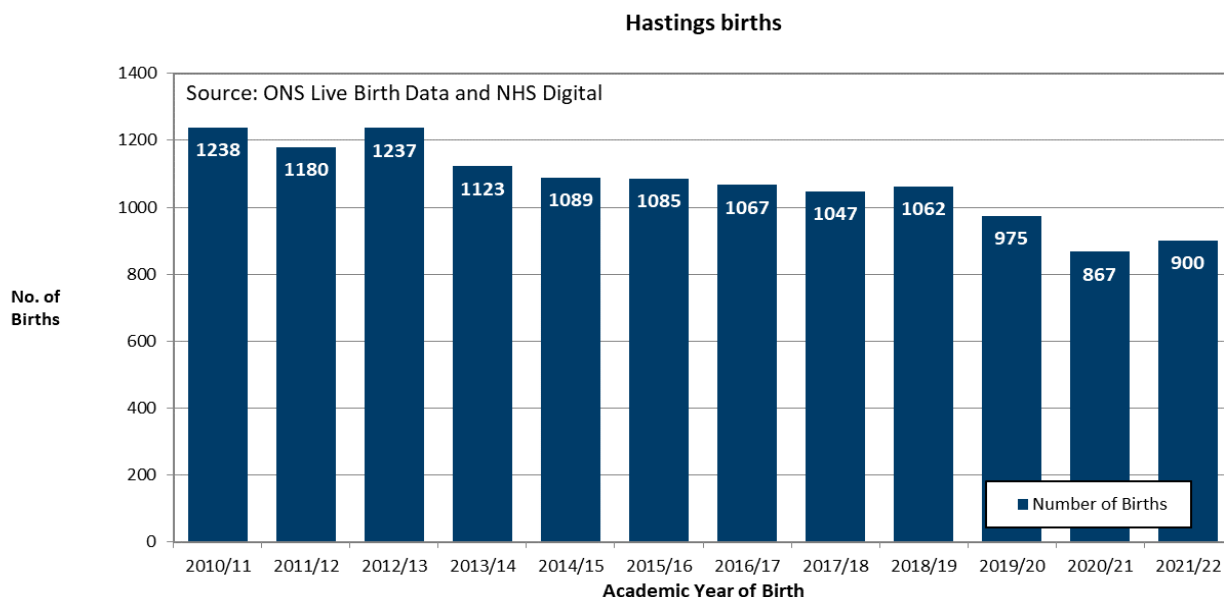
There are 18 primary schools in the area and three secondary schools. Of the 18 primary schools, one is an infant school, and one is a junior school. Nine of the primary schools have nursery provision. One secondary school has sixth form provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
All Saints CofE Junior Academy	7-11	Academy
ARK Blacklands Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
ARK Castledown Primary School	2-11	Academy
ARK Little Ridge Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Christ Church CofE Primary & Nursery Academy	2-11	Academy
Churchwood Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Dudley Infant Academy	4-7	Academy
Hollington Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
Ore Village Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
Robsack Wood Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Sandown Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Community
Silverdale Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Leonard's Church of England Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Paul's Church of England Academy	2-11	Academy
The Baird Primary Academy	3-11	Academy
West St Leonards Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Secondary		
ARK Alexandra Academy	11-18	Academy
The Hastings Academy	11-16	Academy
The St Leonard's Academy	11-16	Academy

* School type correct on 1 September 2023

Births

Births in Hastings continue to fall from a peak of 1,238 in 2010/11.



Housing plans

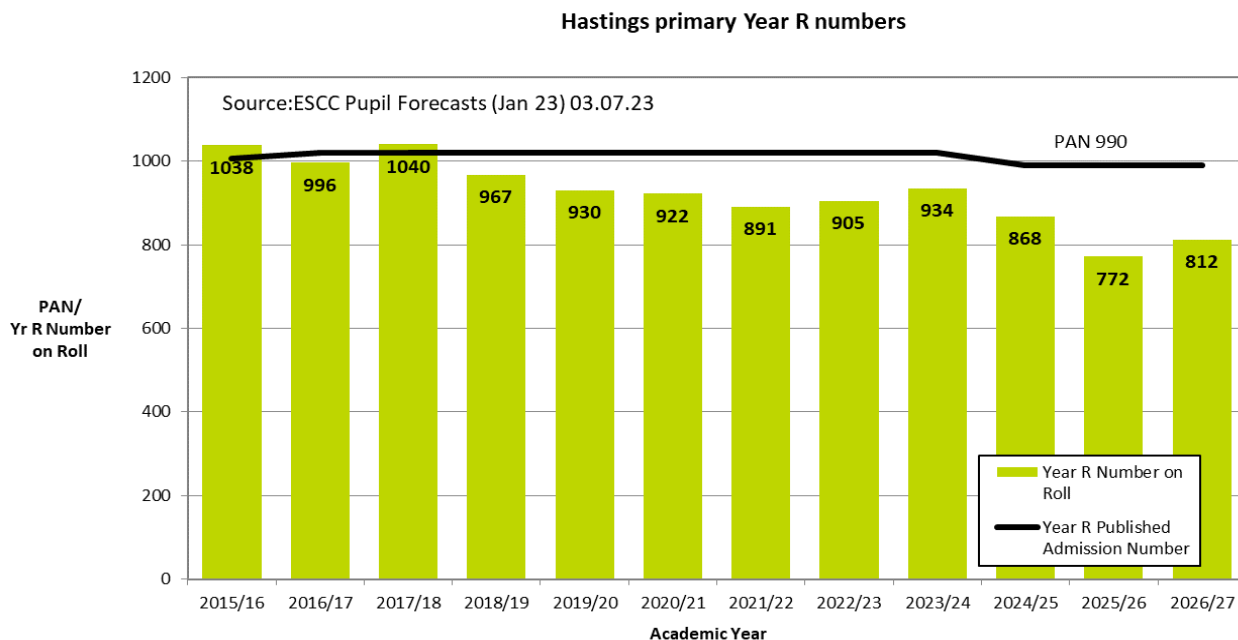
Hastings Borough Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 1,900 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2027/28. Hastings Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in Hastings may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

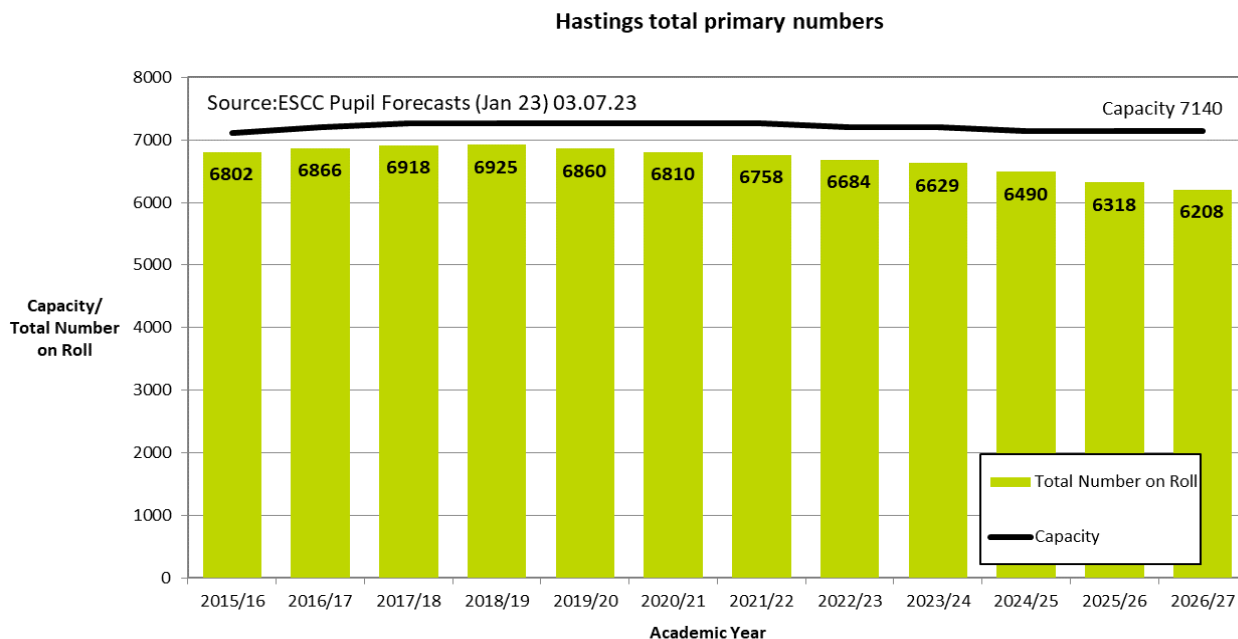
Reception (Year R) intakes in Hastings are forecast to remain well below the current Published Admission Number (PAN) of schools in the town into the latter part of the decade.

Many Hastings children attend surrounding primary schools including Battle and Langton CE Primary School, Crowhurst CE Primary School, Guestling Bradshaw CE Primary School, Icklesham CE Primary School, Netherfield CE Primary School, Sedlescombe CE Primary

School, and Westfield School. Most of these schools are full or close to full. However, going forward, lower levels of demand from Hastings may see numbers in some of these surrounding schools falling.



Lower intakes are predicted to result in higher numbers of surplus places in the town, which are forecast to rise from 7% in 2022/23 to 13% by 2027/28.



The majority of surplus places in the town are within the 15 academies. The three maintained schools are largely full. A decision on reducing the PAN at any of the academies to manage surplus places rests with the respective academy trusts.

As an example, the University of Brighton Academies Trust took a decision in early 2023 to reduce the PAN at Hollington Primary Academy from 60 to 30 with effect from 2024/25 to manage surplus places in the school (since 1 September 2023, the school has been part of the Pioneer Academy Trust). Accommodation will not be removed and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers start to rise again.

Secondary places

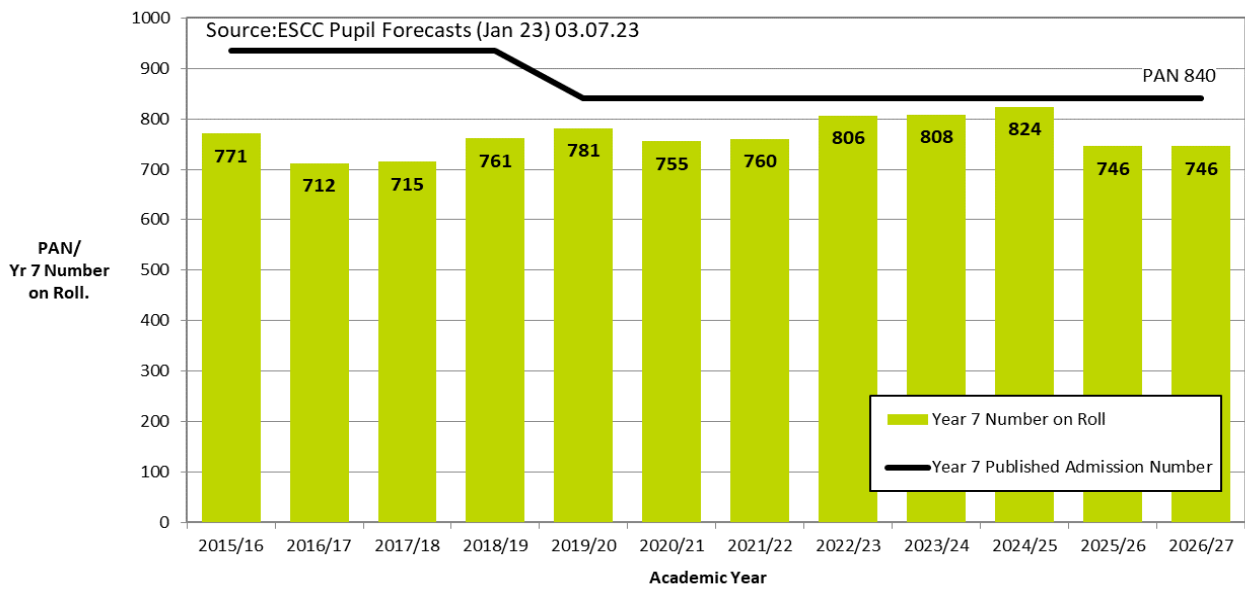
Significant numbers of Hastings children seek places in surrounding schools such as Bexhill High Academy and St Richard's Catholic College and Claverham Community College, Rye College, and Robertsbridge Community College.

Linked to higher numbers coming through primary schools, current demand for Year 7 places is high. The decision by Bexhill High Academy to reduce its PAN from 330 to 300 from 2021/22, has led to fewer children from Hastings gaining admission to the school, with a knock-on increase in demand for places in Hastings schools.

As a result, Year 7 numbers in the area are likely to be high up to and including 2024/25, although the combined PAN of 840 is forecast to be sufficient. However, in 2024/25, this could depend on continued high outflows of Hastings children to surrounding schools.

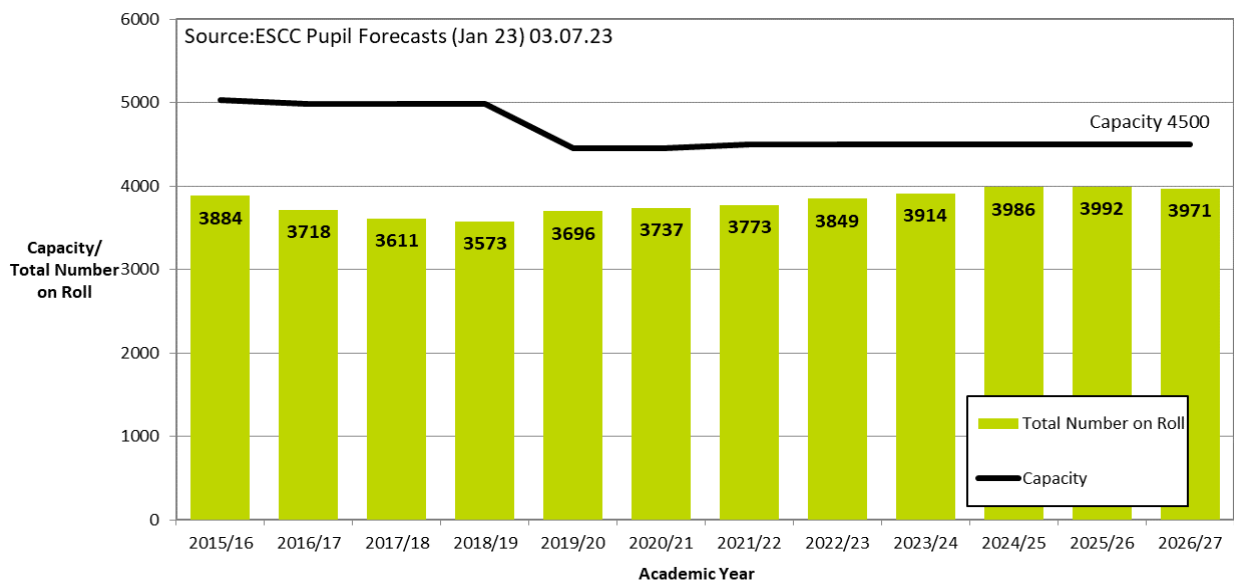
From 2025/26, Year 7 intakes are forecast to fall away, leaving growing numbers of surplus places.

Hastings secondary Year 7 numbers



Surplus places in the area are forecast to fall from 14% in 2022/23 to 12% by 2025/26. One school in the area currently has 25% or more surplus places. As a result of higher Year 7 intakes in the area, surplus places at the school should fall under 25% in 2023/24.

Hastings total secondary numbers



Lewes and surrounding area

Schools

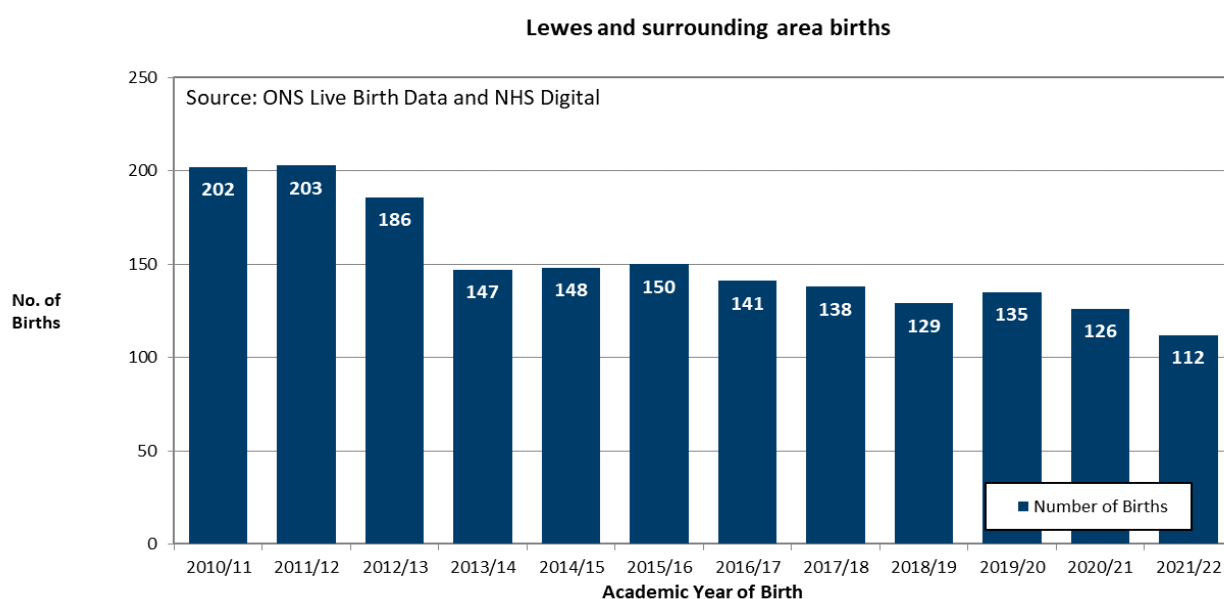
There are six primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Two of the primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Iford and Kingston Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
St Pancras Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
South Malling CofE Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Controlled
Southover CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Wallands Community Primary and Nursery School	3-11	Community
Western Road Community Primary School	4-11	Foundation
Secondary		
Priory School	11-16	Foundation

* School type correct on 1 September 2023

Births

Births in the area continue to fall and have been particularly low since 2013/14.



Housing plans

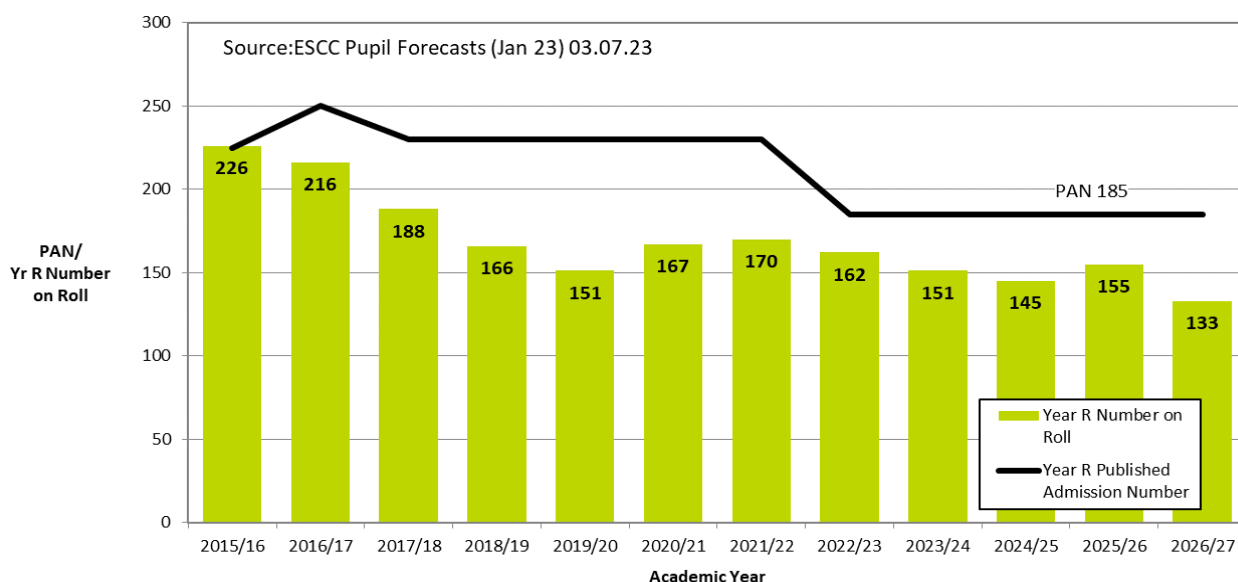
Lewes District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 800 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2029/30. Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority are currently preparing new Local Plans. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

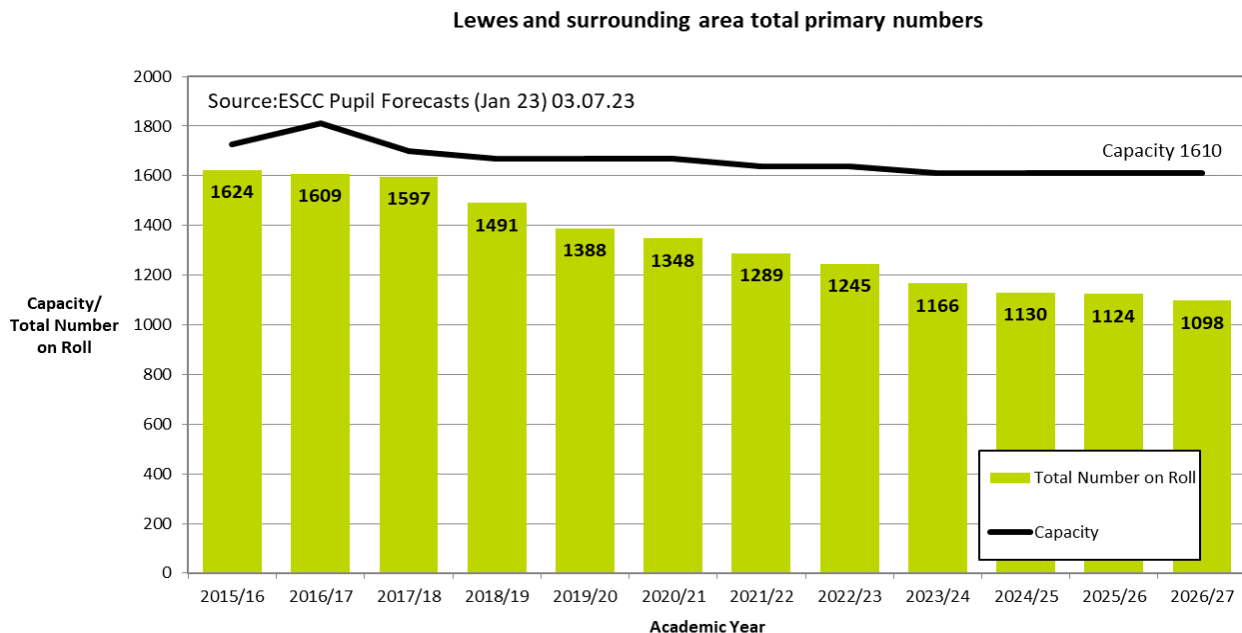
Based on birth and GP registration data, Reception (Year R) numbers in the area are expected to remain low until at least 2026/27.

Some children from Lewes take up places in surrounding rural schools, notably Hamsey Community Primary School. Iford and Kingston CE Primary School experiences significant inflows of children from Newhaven.

Lewes and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



Lower intakes are leading to higher numbers of surplus places in the area, rising from 25% in 2022/23 to potentially 32% by 2026/27. Three schools in the area have 25% or more surplus places.



As a result of falling Year R numbers and reduced demand for places at both schools, the local authority approved a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Southover CE Primary School (from 60 to 45) and Wallands Community Primary School (from 60 to 30) to take effect from the 2022/23 academic year. Accommodation has not been removed from either school and can be brought back into use if pupil numbers start to rise again.

Due to concerns about the long term viability of St Pancras Catholic Primary School, the governing board, supported by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, began a consultation in May 2023 on a proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2024. Following the consultation, the governing board agreed to continue with the statutory closure process by publishing a statutory proposal in September 2023. This was followed by a four-week representation period. The local authority, as the responsible body, will make a final decision on the proposed closure at a Lead Member decision making meeting in November 2023.

In the longer term, despite 800 new homes being planned for the period to 2029/30, the demographic based projections of future births are currently indicating there will be

sufficient Year R places available to meet demand. However, it is possible that, if there is a general upswing in births over the next few years, the added impact of the new housing could lead to Year R numbers being significantly higher in the latter half of the decade than forecasts currently show.

Secondary places

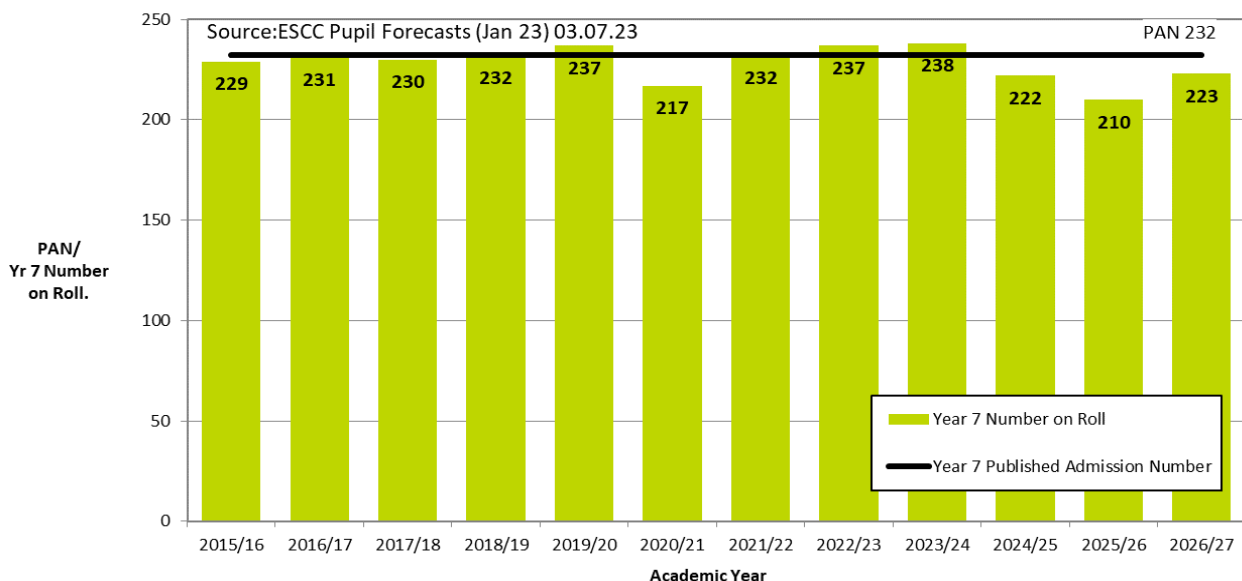
Part of Priory School's admissions area is a joint admissions area with that of King's Academy Ringmer.

Although the village of Ditchling is in a joint admissions area served by Priory School and Chailey School, it is also in the admissions area of Downlands Community School in Hassocks, West Sussex. Traditionally, children from the village have attended Downlands, which is their nearest school.

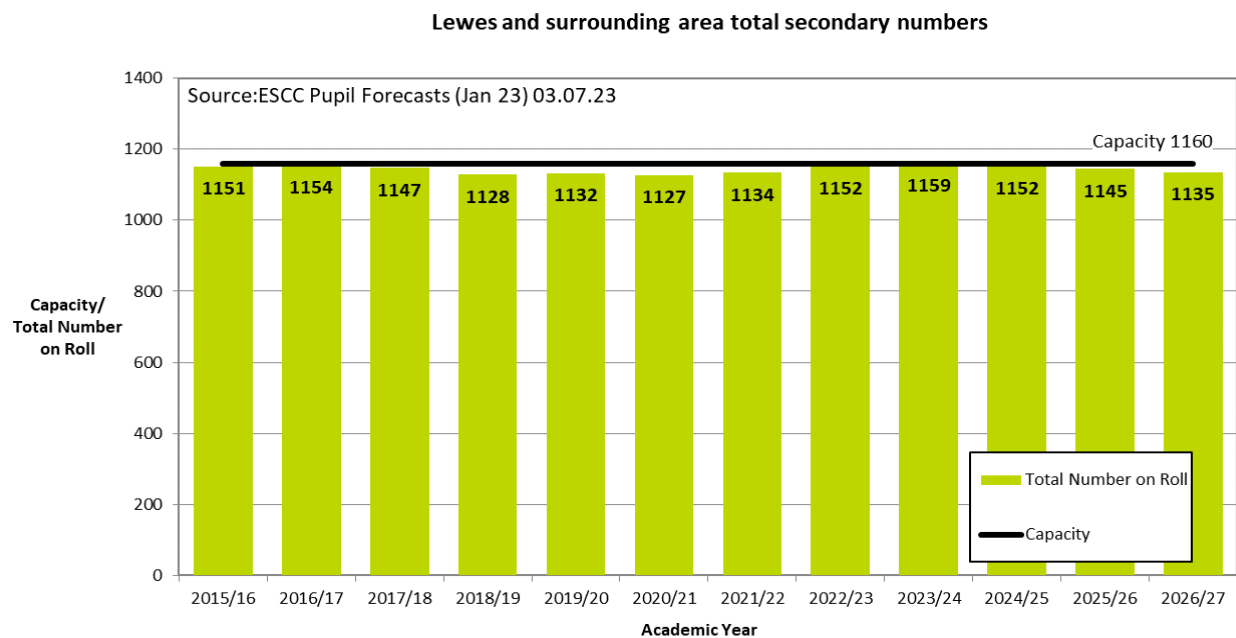
There is routinely significant pupil movement in and out between the Priory School area and notably Kings Academy Ringmer, Chailey School, the Havens area and neighbouring local authority areas.

Priory School may slightly exceed its PAN of 232 in 2023/24. This is a result of the school allocating extra places to cater for demand from out of area, specifically to help alleviate pressures in the Havens area.

Lewes and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers



From 2024/25, numbers of in-area children coming into Year 7 will fall away significantly. Future Year 7 numbers at Priory School will depend heavily on the extent to which demand from out of area, particularly from Brighton and Hove, bridges the gap between the demand from local children and Priory’s PAN.



The Havens

The Havens area covers both Newhaven and Peacehaven.

Schools

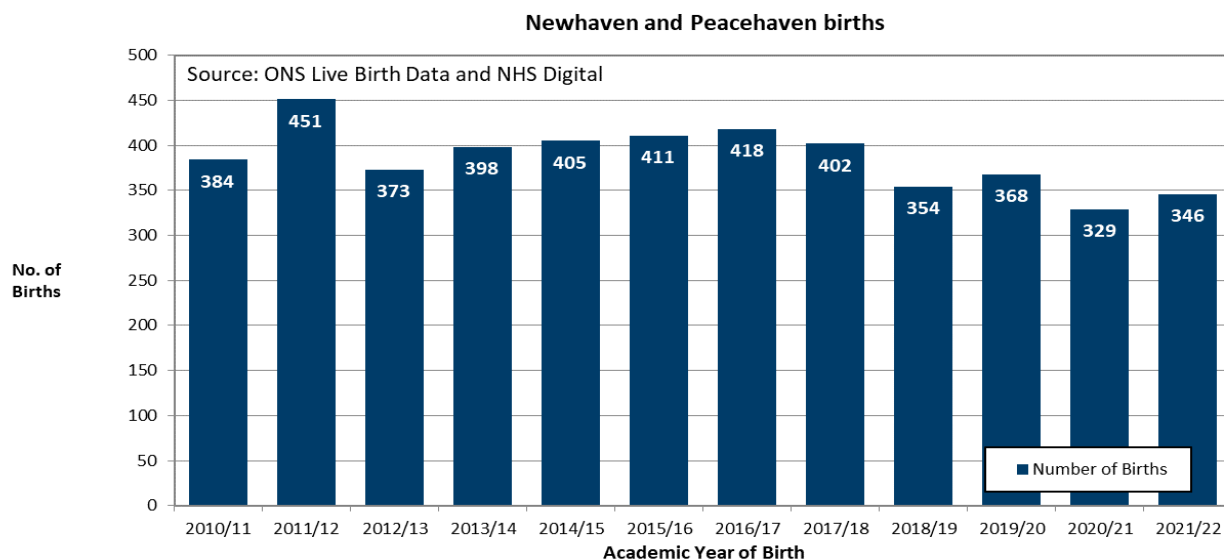
There are four primary schools in Newhaven. In Peacehaven, there are three primary schools, all with nursery provision. There are two secondary schools in the Havens area, one in each town.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary (Newhaven)		
Breakwater Academy	4-11	Academy
Denton Community Primary School	3-11	Community
Harbour Primary and Nursery School	2-11	Community
High Cliff Academy	3-11	Academy
Primary (Peacehaven)		
Meridian Community Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Community
Peacehaven Heights Academy	3-11	Academy
Telscombe Cliffs Academy	2-11	Academy
Secondary		
Seahaven Academy	11-16	Academy
Peacehaven Community School	11-16	Academy

* School type correct on 1 September 2023

Births

Births in the area have continued to decline in recent years, since their peak in 2011/12.



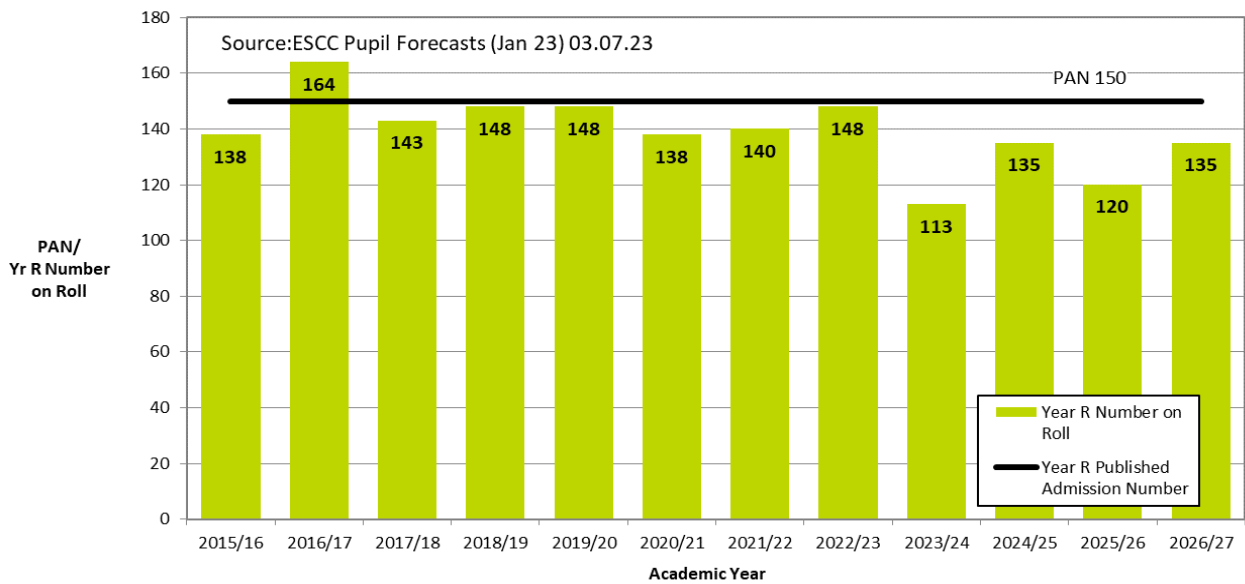
Housing plans

Lewes District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 2,300 new homes remain to be built in the Havens area during the Local Plan period to 2029/30. Lewes District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places (Newhaven)

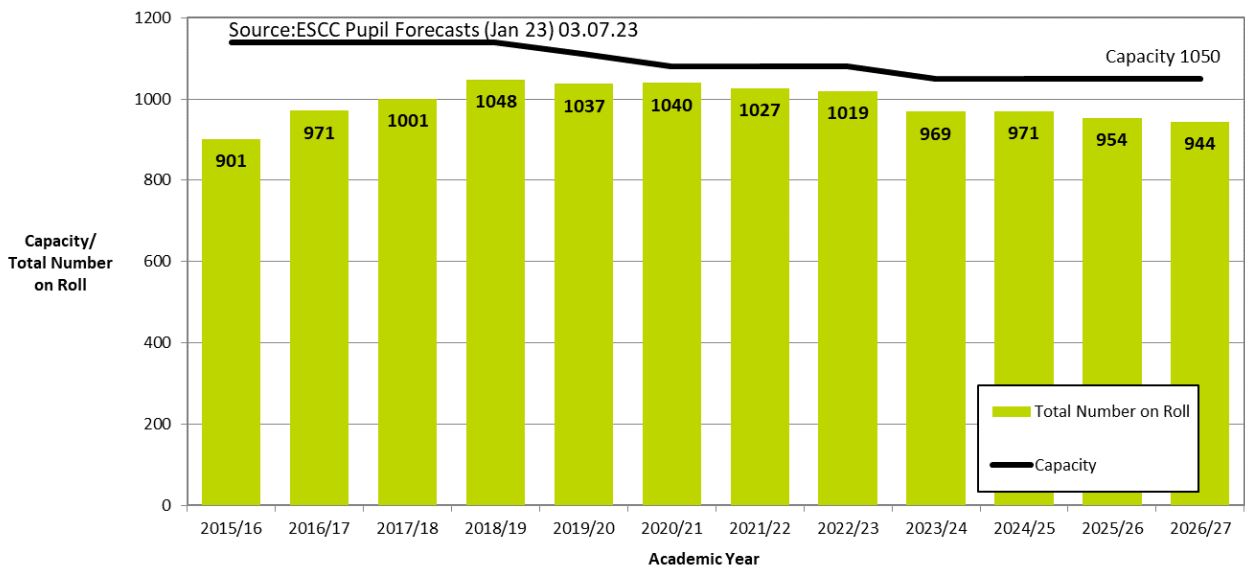
In recent years, reception (Year R) numbers have tended to be close to full. However, owing to fewer children coming into primary schools and higher than usual outflows to Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, 2023/24 is likely to see a significant downturn in intake numbers. Based on birth and GP registration data, and assuming current preference patterns continue, intake numbers are forecast to stay comfortably below the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the area at least until 2026/27.

Newhaven primary Year R numbers



In 2022/23 there was 6% surplus capacity in the town. By 2026/27 this is expected to have risen to 10%.

Newhaven total primary numbers

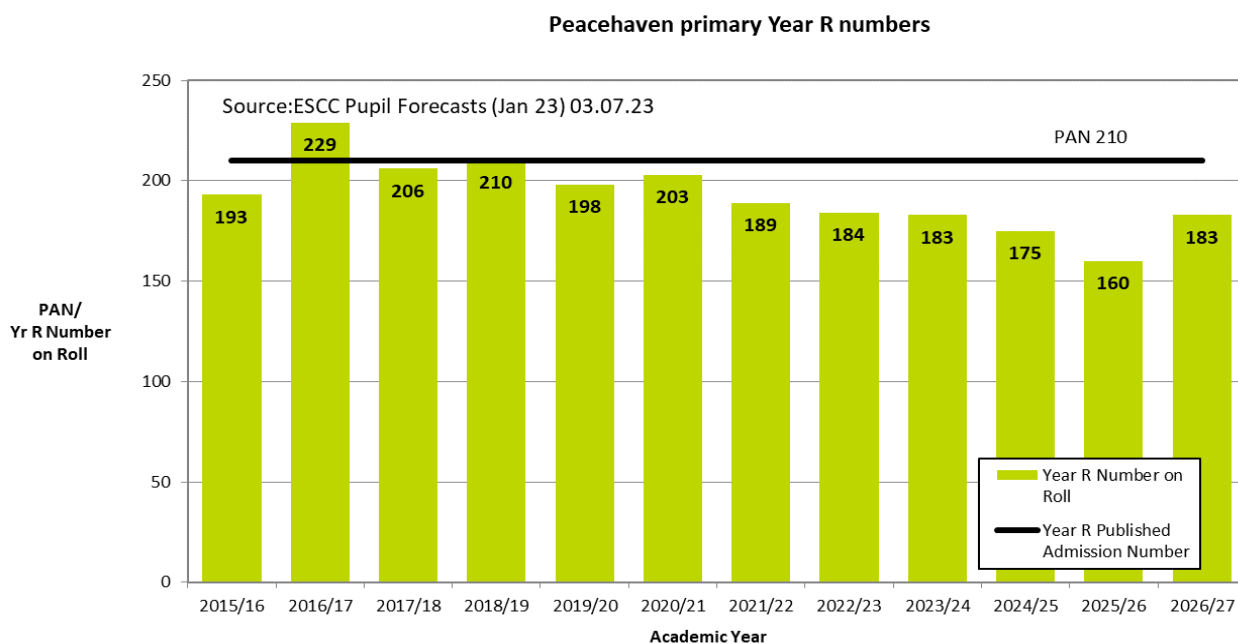


Pressures at Year R and on overall primary school places may resurface in future years as a result of planned house building in the town to 2029/30.

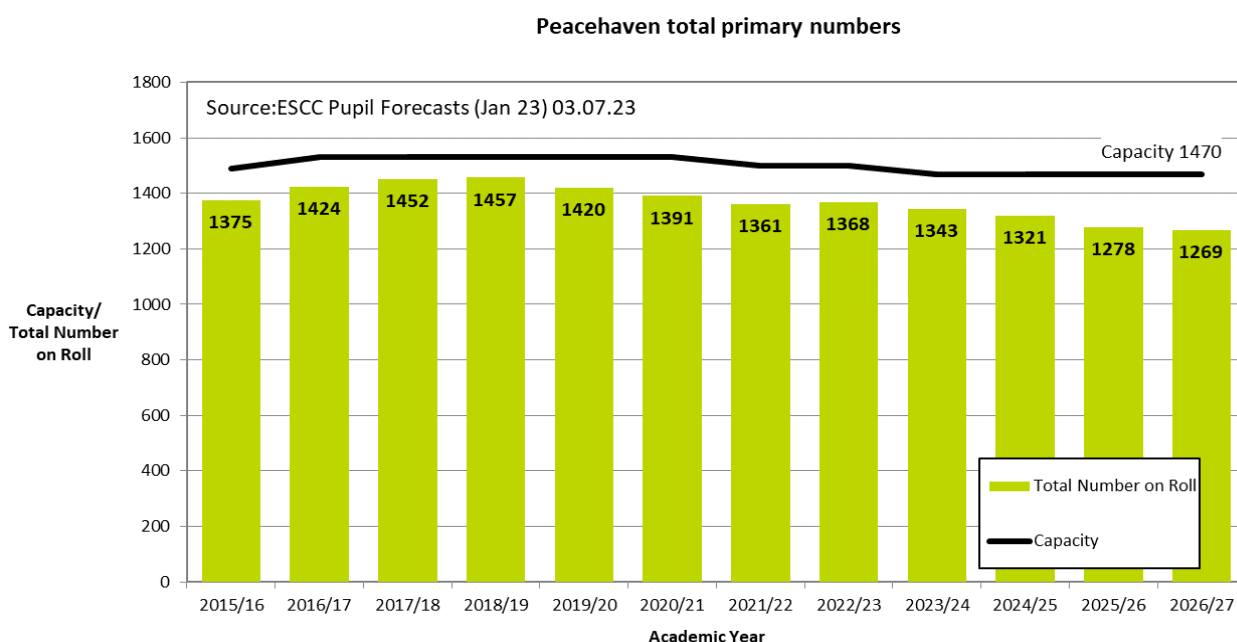
Primary places (Peacehaven)

Live birth and GP data and, for the longer term, demographic projections indicate that Year R numbers in Peacehaven are likely to be well below the PAN of 210 for the foreseeable future.

Saltdean Primary School in neighbouring Brighton and Hove is traditionally the school of preference for children who live in East Saltdean which is on the East Sussex side of the border. Traditionally around 20 to 30 East Sussex children per year group obtain a place at Saltdean Primary School. East Sussex children who require a place at the school generally secure one. Additionally, a few Peacehaven area children normally attend St Margaret's CE Primary School and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School in nearby Rottingdean, both in Brighton and Hove.



In 2022/23, surplus places in Peacehaven stood at 8%. By 2026/27, this could have risen to 14%.



The local authority will continue to monitor the increasing level of surplus places in the area.

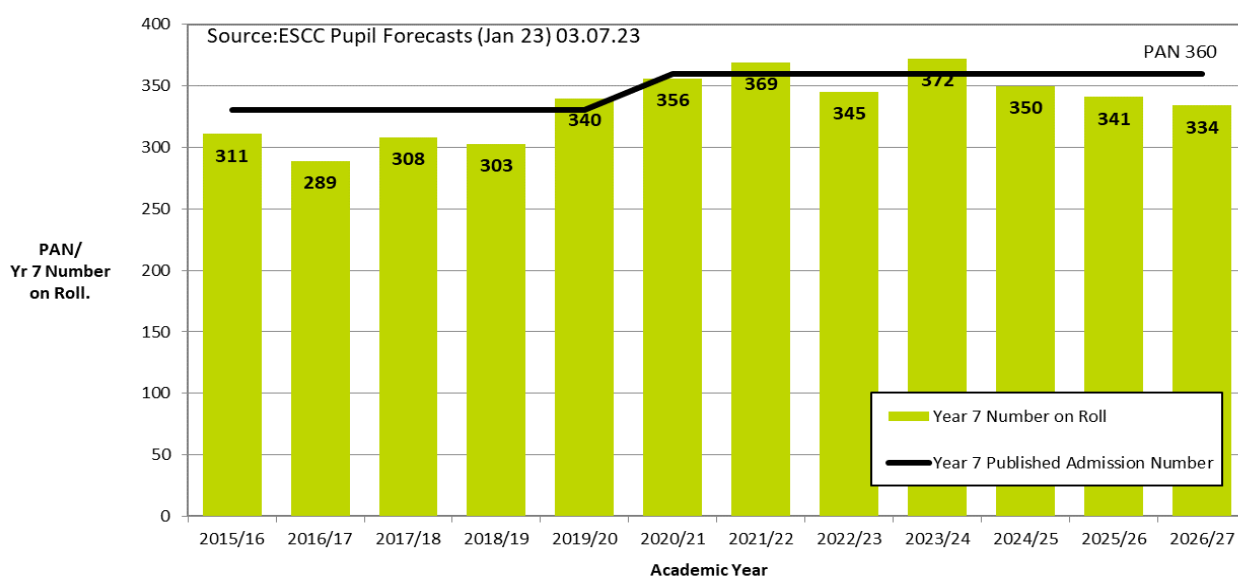
Secondary places

Seahaven Academy's school admissions area covers both Newhaven and Peacehaven and includes the priority admissions area of Peacehaven Community School.

There is a net outflow from the area to Seaford Head School and Priory School, in Lewes. There are also inflows from and outflows to schools in Brighton and Hove.

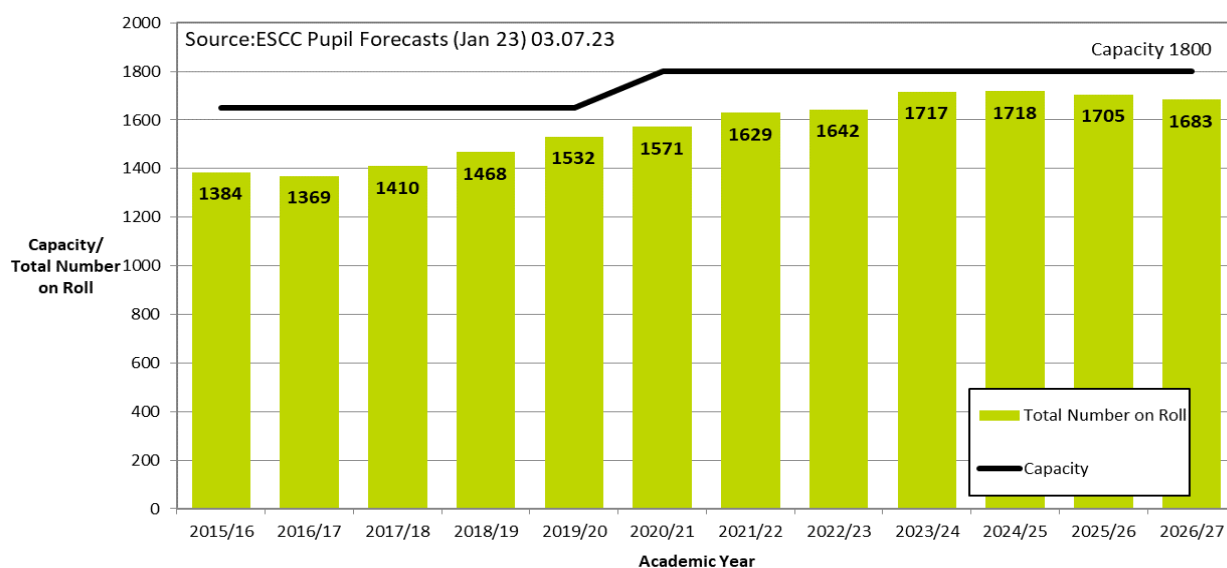
Both Peacehaven Community School and Seahaven Academy have experienced pressures on Year 7 places in recent years. For 2023/24, despite both Priory School and Seaford Head School both agreeing to take numbers over PAN to help alleviate pressures in the Havens, the combined PAN of 360 is forecast to be marginally exceeded.

The Havens secondary Year 7 numbers



Intakes may be lower in the years from 2024/25. Surplus capacity in the area, at 9% in 2022/23, is expected to reach 7% by 2026/27.

The Havens total secondary numbers



Seaford

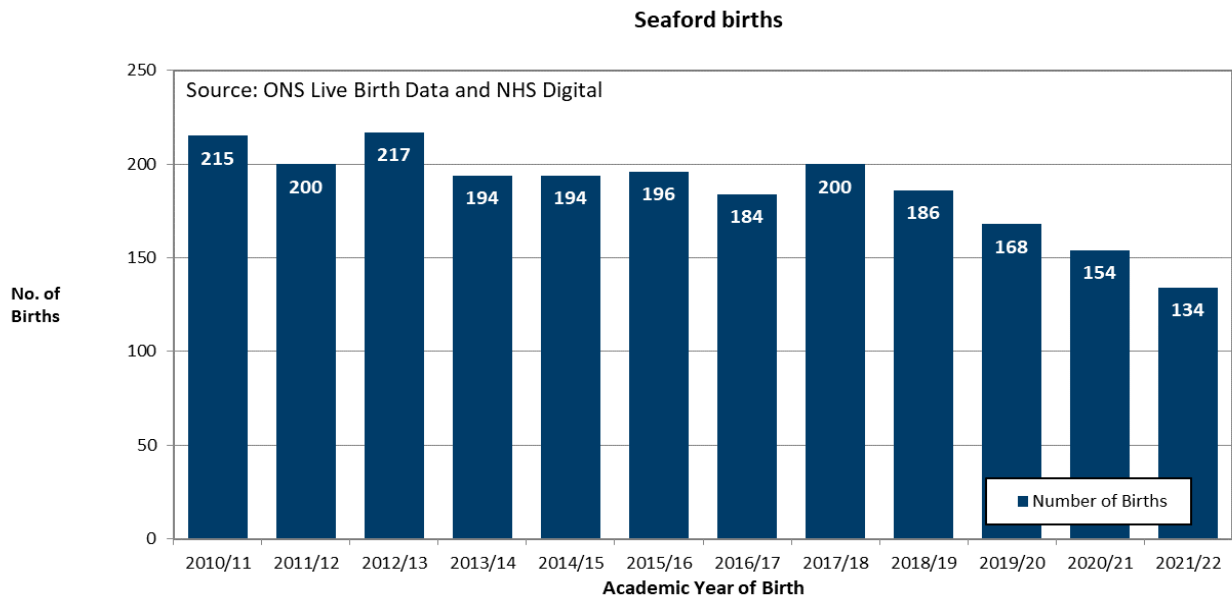
Schools

There are four primary schools in the area and one secondary school with a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Annecy Catholic Primary School	4-11	Academy
Chyngton School	4-11	Academy
Cradle Hill Community Primary School	2-11	Community
Seaford Primary School	4-11	Community
Secondary		
Seaford Head School	11-18	Academy

Births

Births in Seaford continue to fall from a peak of 217 in 2012/13. The last three years have seen particularly low births.



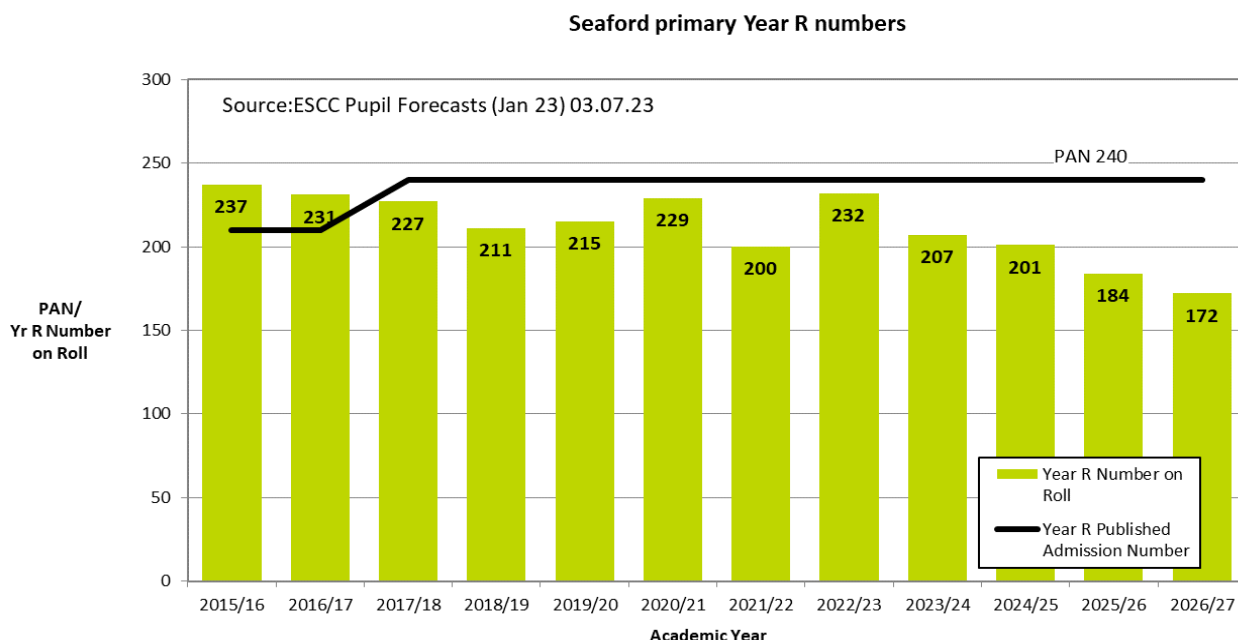
Housing plans

Lewes District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 500 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2029/30. Lewes District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

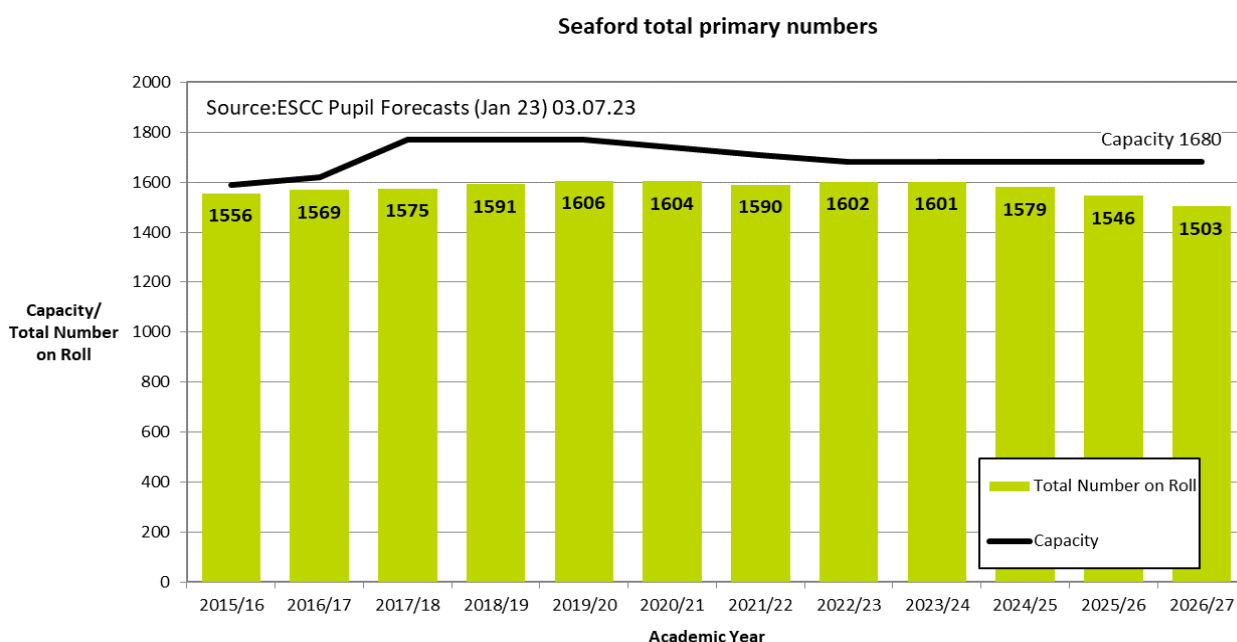
Primary places

Reception (Year R) intakes to the Seaford primary schools are predicted to be below the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the foreseeable future.

While the predicted general upswing in births through the decade may lead to higher Year R numbers in Seaford in the latter part of the 2020s, the relatively modest levels of new housing currently planned for the town raises a question mark as to whether intake numbers are likely to recover to levels consistently over 210.



Lower intakes will lead to higher numbers of surplus places in the town, potentially rising to 11% by 2026/27.



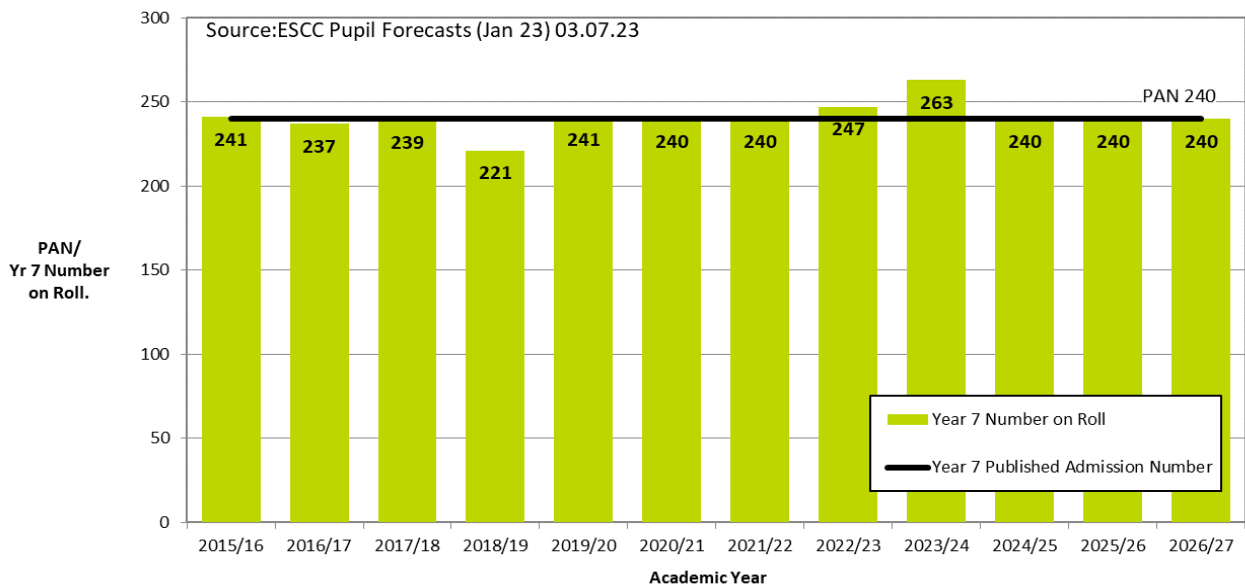
The local authority will continue to monitor the increasing level of surplus places in the area.

Secondary places

In 2023/24, Seaford Head School agreed to exceed its PAN of 240 to help alleviate pressures in the neighbouring Havens place planning area.

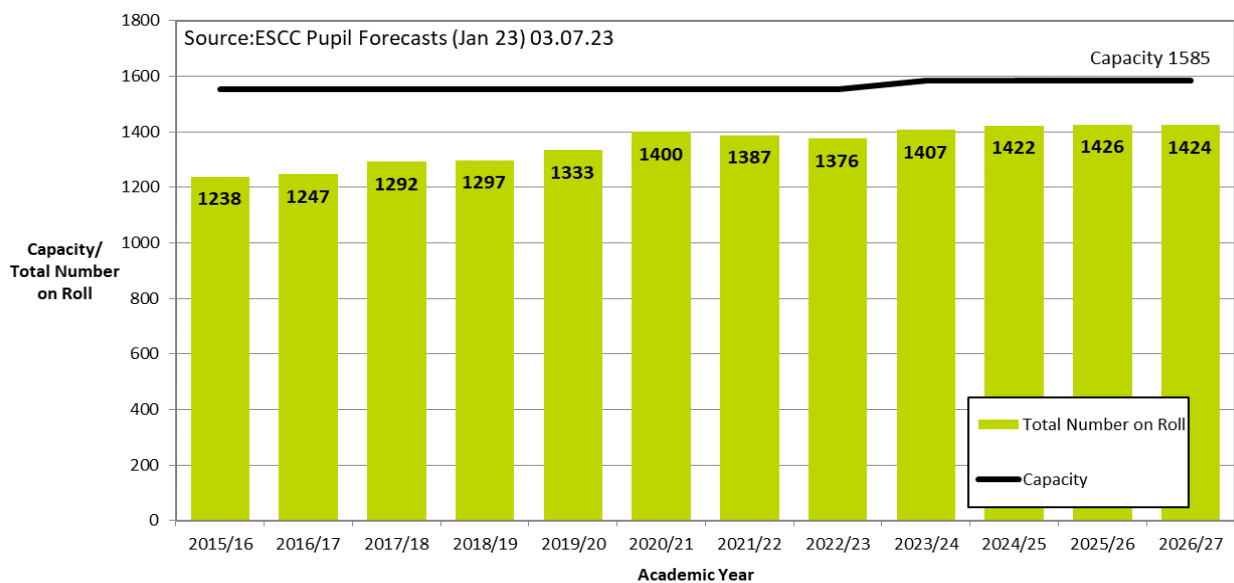
Although the school continues to be oversubscribed, it is forecast to be able to keep to its PAN in future years. This will entail the school admissions system redirecting non-priority out of area applicants to Seahaven Academy and Peacehaven Community School in the Havens place planning area. The school has taken the decision to reduce its PAN to 232 with effect from 2024/25.

Seaford Head secondary Year 7 numbers



Surplus capacity at the school is likely to reduce during the plan period, from 12% in 2022/23 to 10% by 2026/27.

Seaford Head School total secondary numbers



In supporting the school to admit a larger intake in 2023/24, the local authority installed a temporary classroom on site during summer 2023, temporarily increasing capacity at the school by 30 places.

Rural Lewes

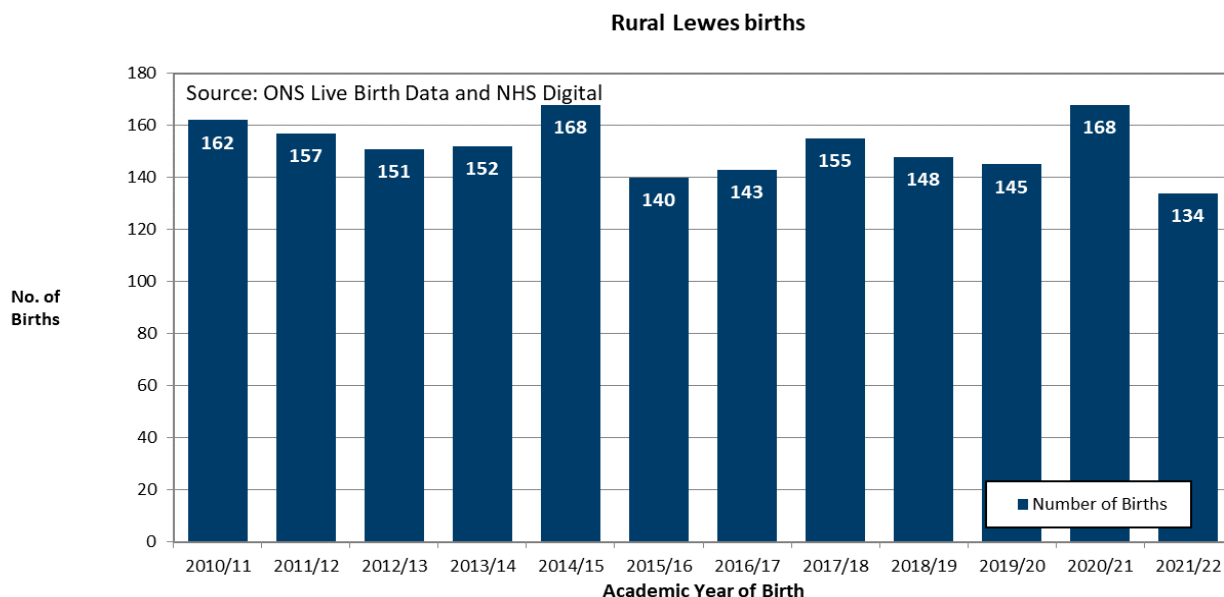
Schools

There are nine primary schools and two secondary schools in the area. Three primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Barcombe Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Ditchling St Margaret's Church of England Primary School	2-11	Academy
Firle Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Hamsey Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Newick Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Plumpton Primary School	4-11	Community
Ringmer Primary and Nursery School	2-11	Community
Wivelsfield Primary School	2-11	Community
Secondary		
Chailey School	11-16	Community
King's Academy Ringmer	11-16	Academy

Births

Having been relatively steady in recent years, births in the area rose in 2020/21 to a level last seen in 2014/15. Births subsequently fell again in 2021/22.



Housing plans

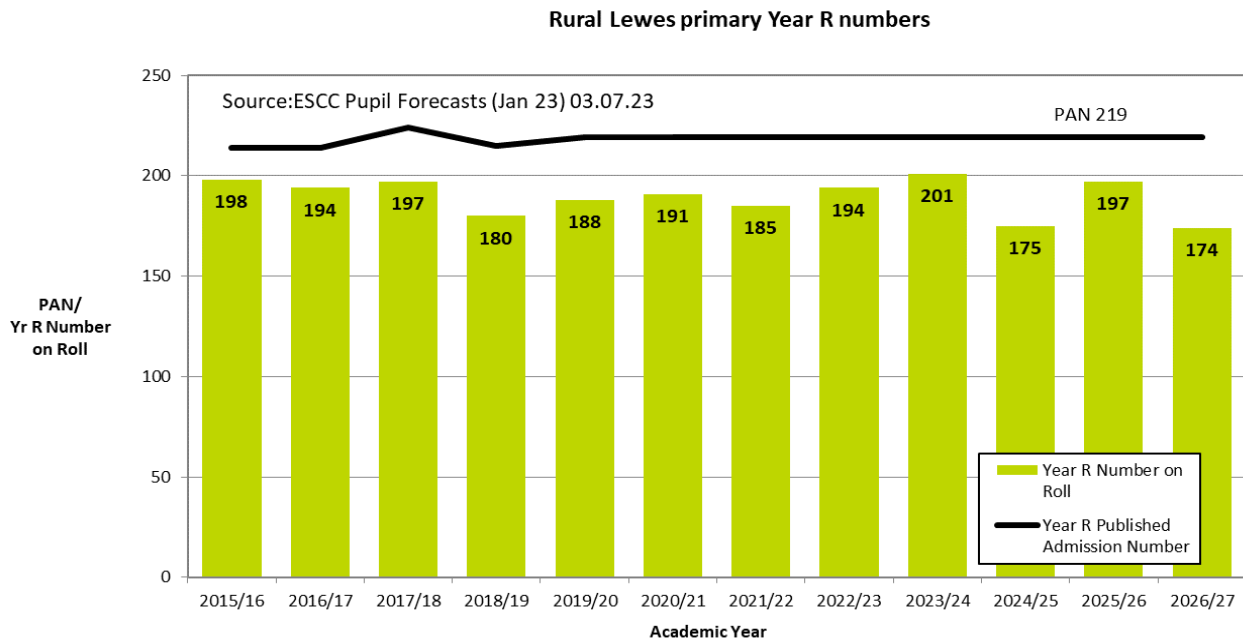
Lewes District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 700 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2029/30, of which approximately 300 are in Ringmer Parish. Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority are currently preparing new Local Plans. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

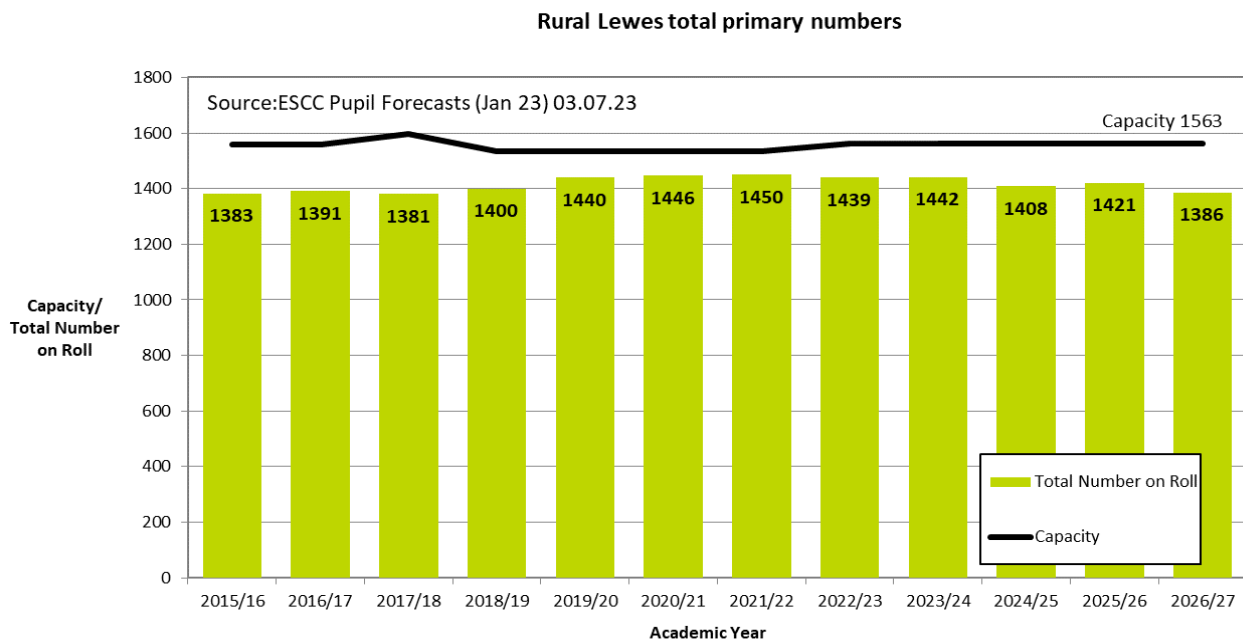
The 219 reception (Year R) places in the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future.

However, the picture will vary between individual school areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate significantly from year to year, since the size of the cohorts of

children living in small geographical areas sometimes differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise year-on-year to accommodate these fluctuations.



Surplus places in the area are expected to grow from 8% in 2022/23 to 11% by 2026/27. One school in the area has more than 25% surplus places.



Despite its expansion in 2017/18, Wivelsfield Primary School is already full, and its Published Admission Number (PAN) was exceeded in 2022/23. It is not currently forecast

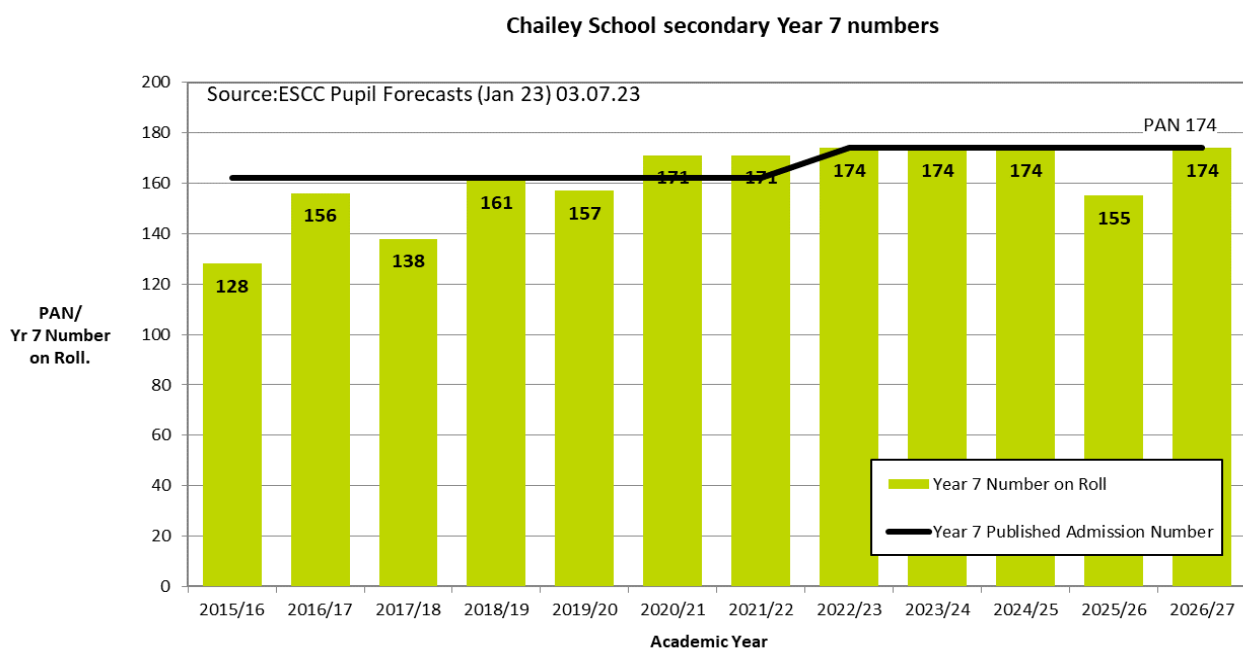
to be exceeded again, but recent new housing at Wivelsfield Green and either side of the East Sussex / West Sussex Border in Hayward's Heath and Burgess Hill is likely to place additional pressure on places over the short to medium term.

The local authority will monitor the increasing level of surplus places in the area.

Secondary places (Chailey School)

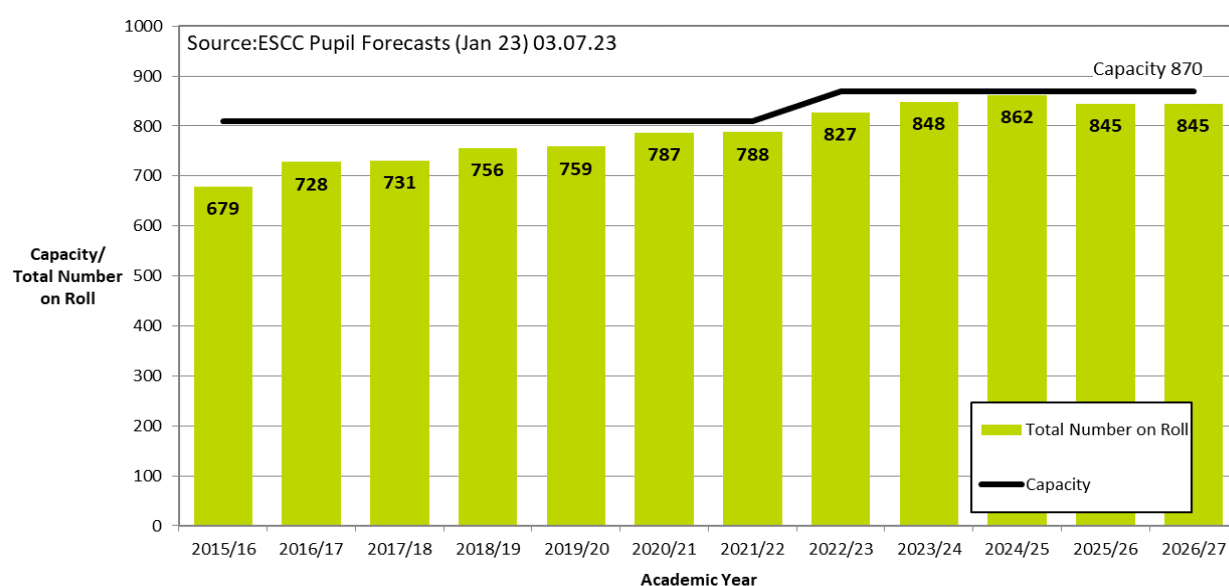
Demand from West Sussex, particularly with the large volume of housing being built in Burgess Hill, should allow Chailey School to generally be able to fill to its PAN of 174 in most of the years to 2027/28, with 2025/26 likely to be the exception.

Although the village of Ditchling is in a joint admissions area between Chailey School and Priory School, it is also in the admissions area of Downlands Community School in Hassocks, West Sussex. Traditionally children from the village have attended Downlands, which is their nearest school.



Total numbers on roll are expected to be close to Chailey School's capacity of 870 in the coming years.

Chailey School total secondary numbers

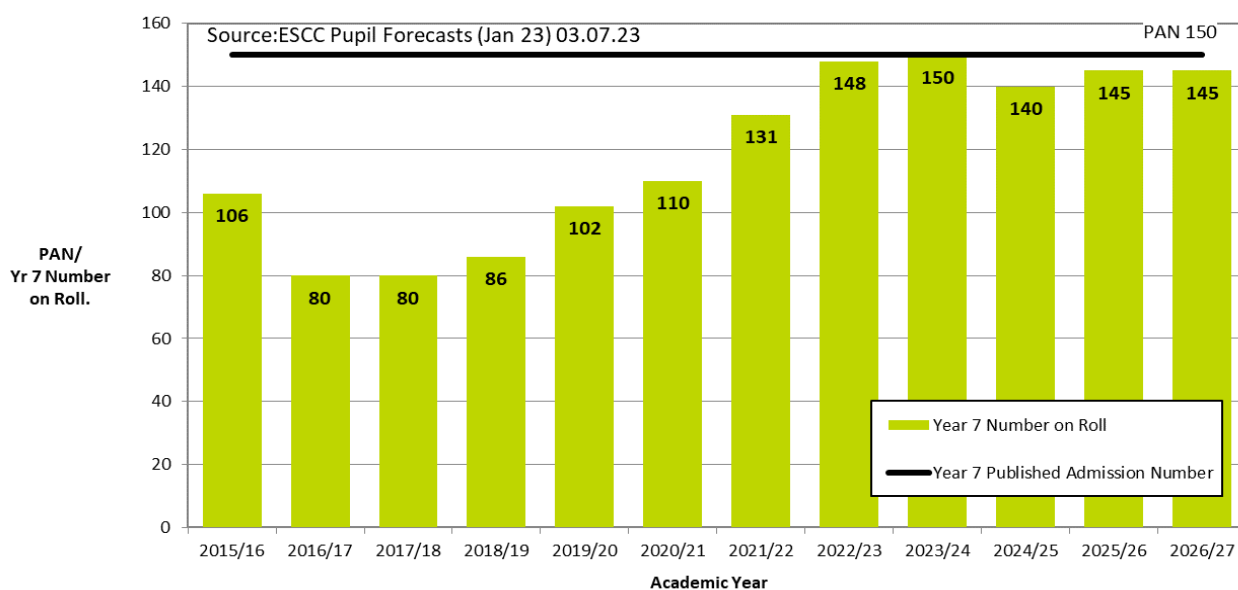


Secondary places (Kings Academy Ringmer)

Except for the joint school admissions area with Priory School, Kings Academy Ringmer's community area does not include a town. Traditionally the school has relied on attracting significant numbers of applicants from other areas, notably from the joint area with Priory School and Hailsham Community College.

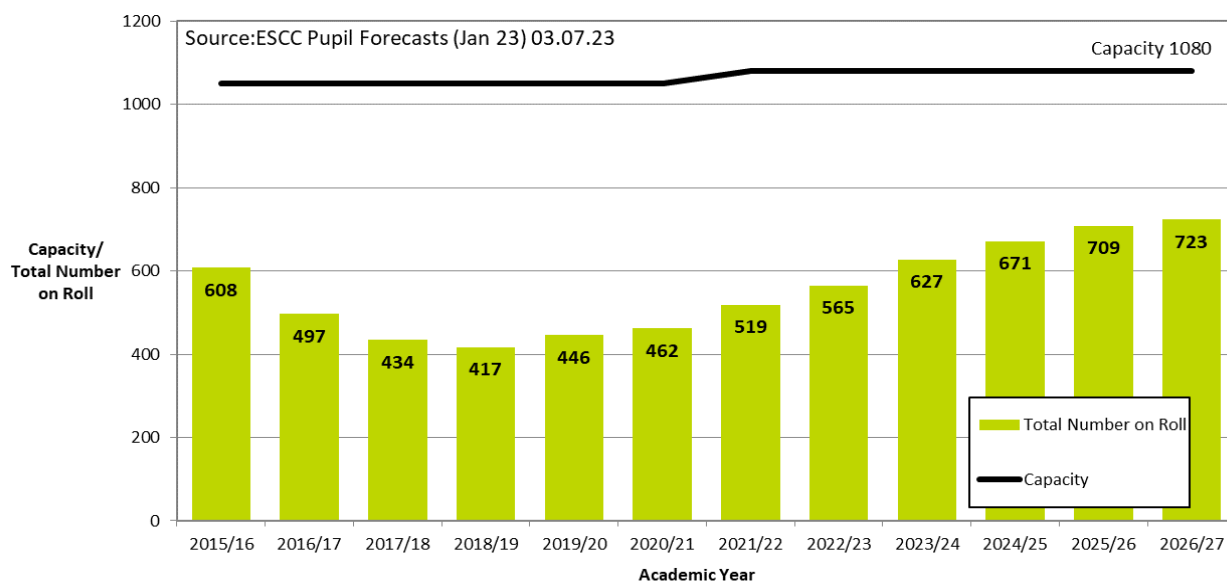
King's Academy Ringmer nearly filled to PAN in 2022/23 and, depending on parental preference patterns in relation to surrounding schools, could continue to have high intake numbers in the short to medium term. However, whether these numbers are achieved will partly depend on the school experiencing larger inflows from other planning areas, notably Hailsham and surrounding area.

King's Academy Ringmer secondary Year 7 numbers



In 2022/23, Kings Academy Ringmer had 48% surplus places. This is in part owing to accommodation remaining on site following a previous PAN reduction from 180 to 150 and the school's former sixth form remaining closed. Surplus capacity is expected to have fallen to 33% by 2026/27.

King's Academy Ringmer total secondary numbers



Bexhill and surrounding area

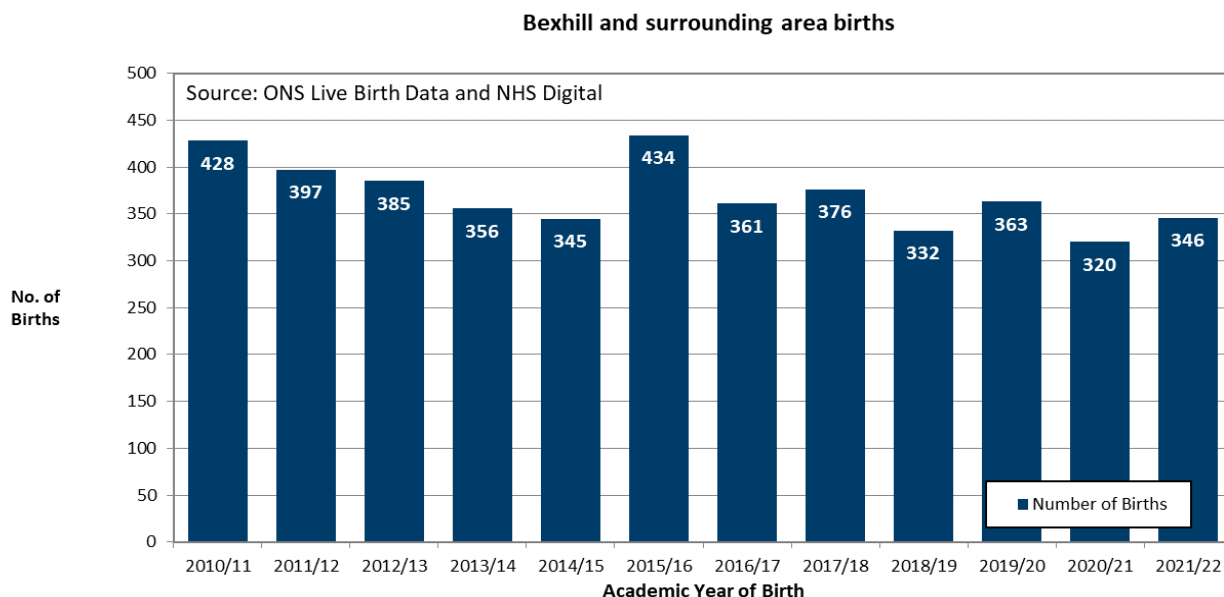
Schools

There are ten primary schools in the area and two secondary schools. Two primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
All Saints Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chantry Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Glenleigh Park Primary Academy	2-11	Academy
King Offa Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
Little Common School	4-11	Community
Pebsham Primary Academy	4-11	Academy
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Peter and St Paul CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Catsfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Ninfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
Secondary		
Bexhill High Academy	11-16	Academy
St Richard's Catholic College	11-16	Voluntary Aided

Births

Births in Bexhill have remained relatively steady for a number of years, barring the peaks in 2010/11 and 2015/16.



Housing plans

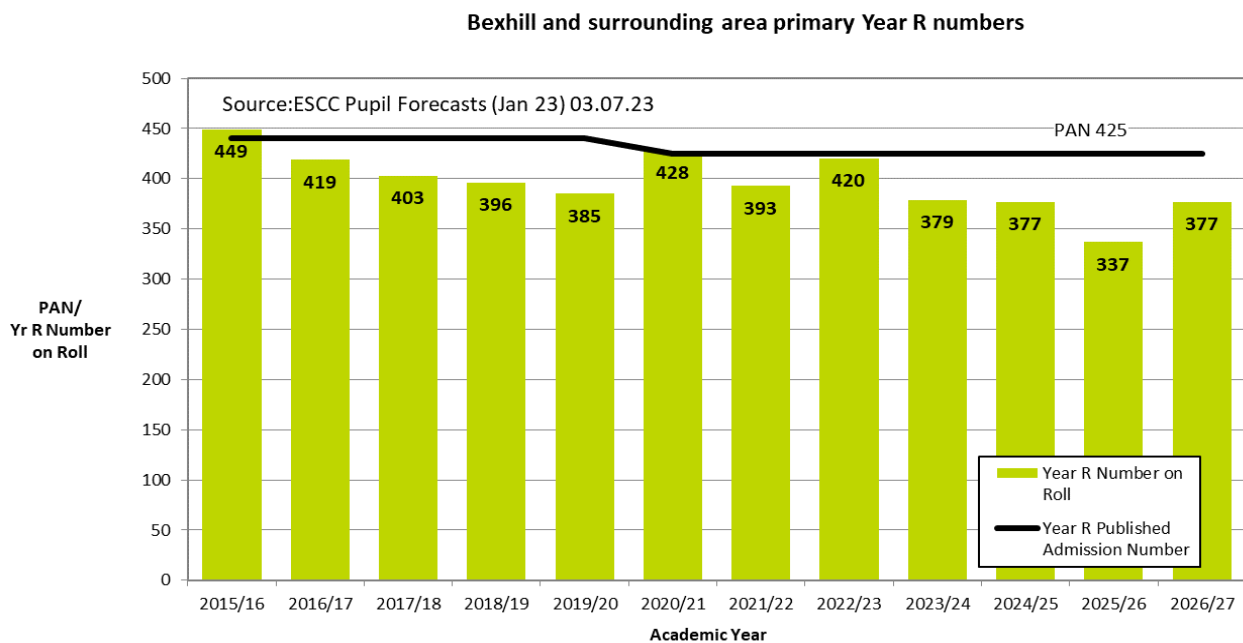
Rother District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 1,700 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2027/28. Rother District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

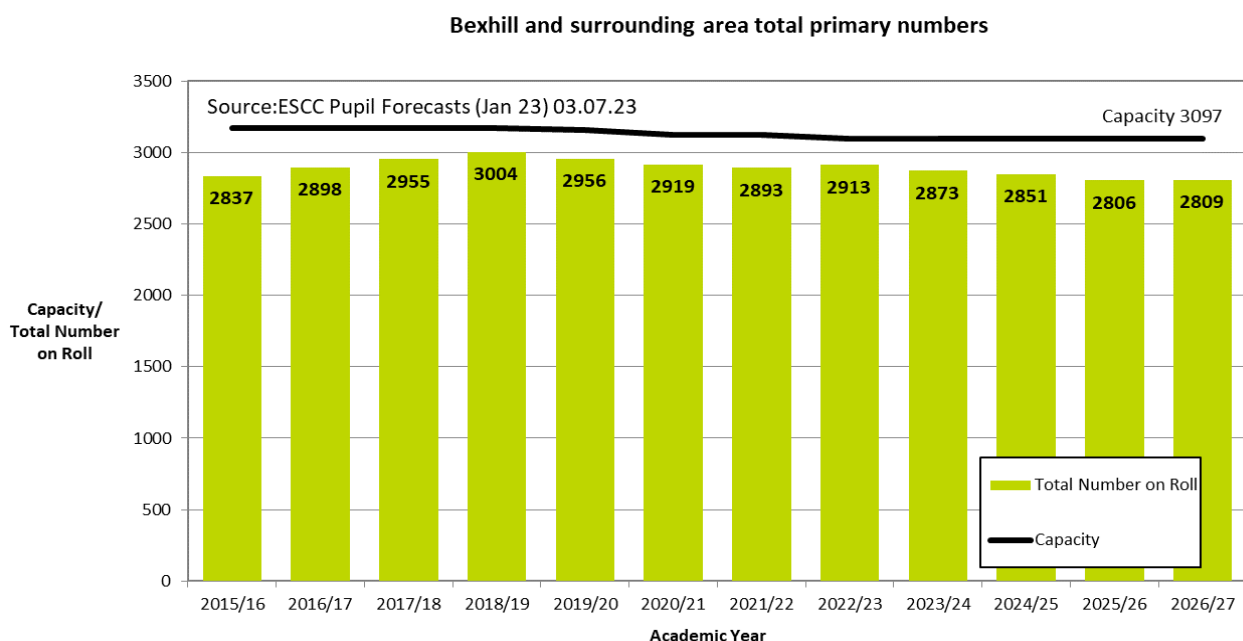
Births and GP registration data indicate that the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 425 for the area should not be exceeded for the foreseeable future.

However, a general upswing in future births, coupled with the high volume of new housing planned for the area, including a significant amount on land north of Pebsham, could result in reception (Year R) shortfalls towards the end of the decade.

Some primary schools in the area experience inflows of children from Hastings. There are also outflows to surrounding schools including Battle and Langton CE Primary School.



In 2022/23, surplus places stood at 6% of capacity. By 2026/27, this figure is predicted to have grown to 9%. One school in the area had 25% or more surplus places.



The local authority has an option agreement on land for a new school within the development site north of Pebsham and will bring forward proposals to create provision to serve the development at the appropriate time. To a large extent the timing of this

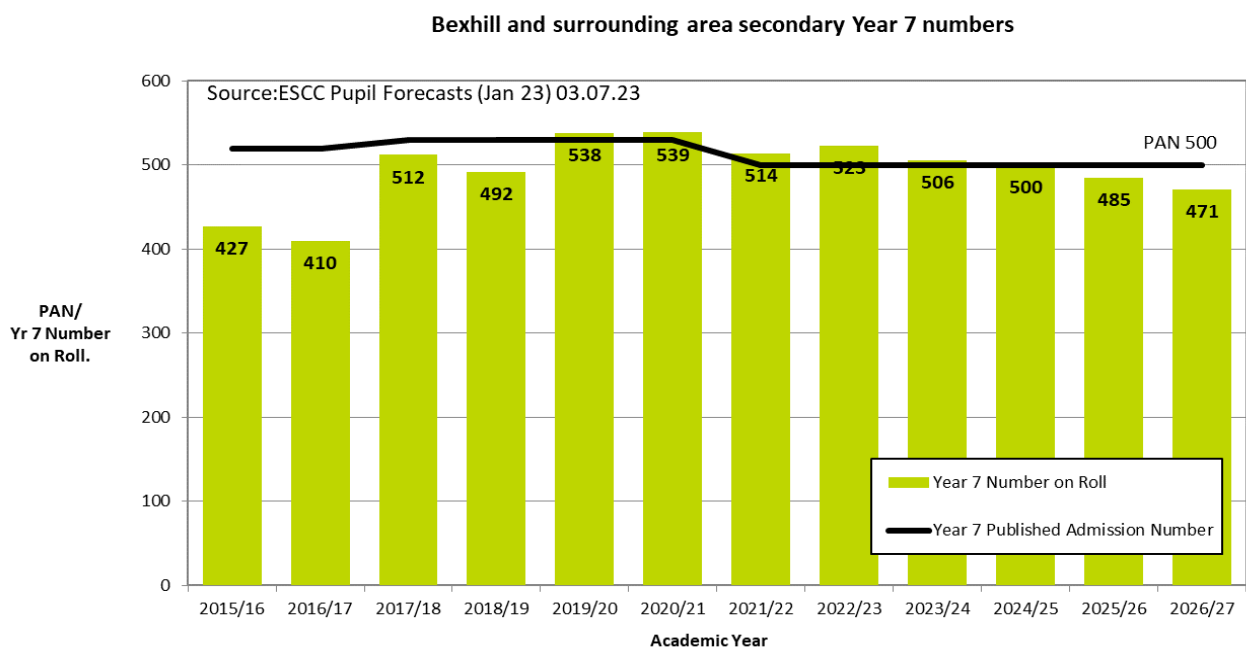
will be dependent upon when the school site is transferred by the developer to the local authority and the demand for places in the area at that time.

Secondary places

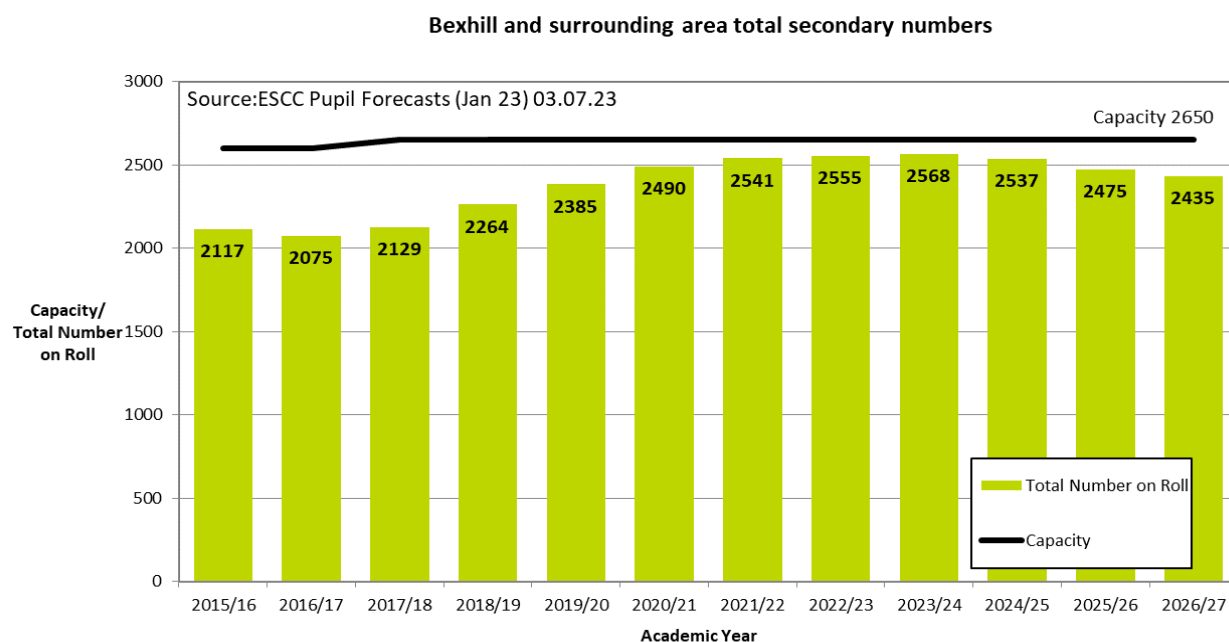
Bexhill High Academy has a PAN of 300. St Richard's Catholic College has a PAN of 200, giving a combined formal PAN of 500 for the town.

St Richard's Catholic College takes significant numbers of children from Hastings, Eastbourne, and Willingdon. Bexhill High Academy takes significant numbers of children from Hastings. There are also outflows of children from Bexhill to Claverham Community College and Hastings.

For 2023/24, St Richards was able to accommodate all on-time Catholic applications within its formal PAN and this is likely to be the case over the coming years. Both schools are forecast to be full to PAN in 2023/24 and again in 2024/25. In 2025/26 and 2026/27 there may be Year 7 spaces at Bexhill High Academy.



Surplus capacity in the area is predicted to increase from 4% in 2022/23 to 8% by 2026/27.



Longer term should there be a requirement for additional places in the area to serve the large volume of new housing planned, the local authority will work with Bexhill High Academy, St Richard's Catholic College, and the Catholic Diocese to address this.



Polegate School

Battle

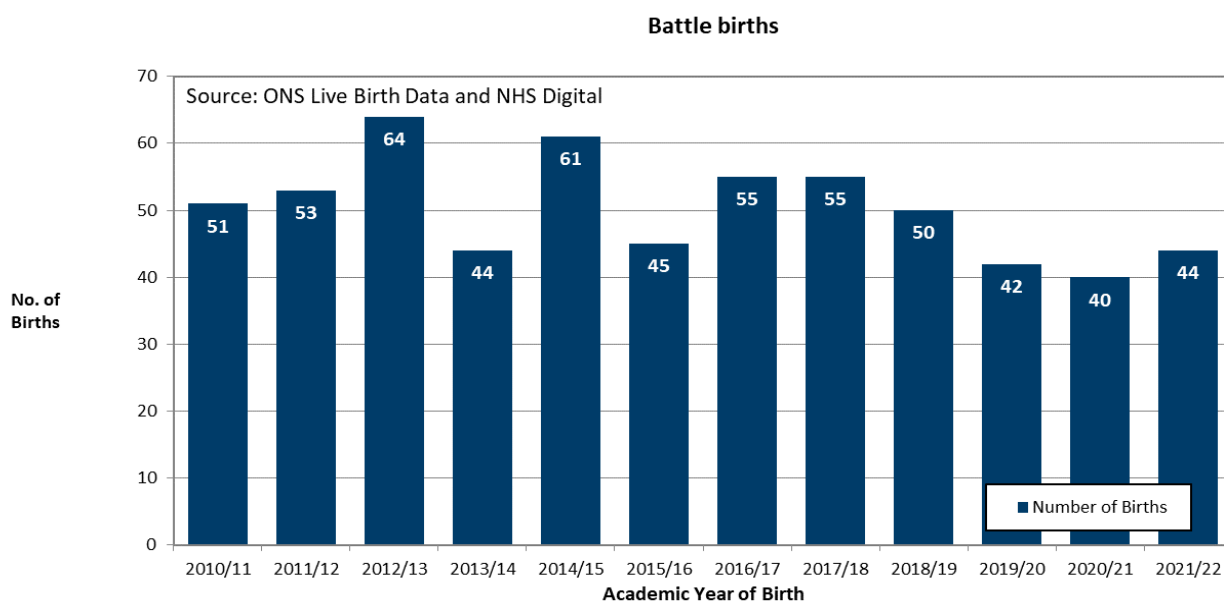
Schools

There is one primary school in the area and one secondary school.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Secondary		
Claverham Community College	11-16	Community

Births

Births in the area continue to decline, with each of the last three years in the low 40s.



Housing plans

Rother District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 500 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan

period to 2027/28. Rother District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

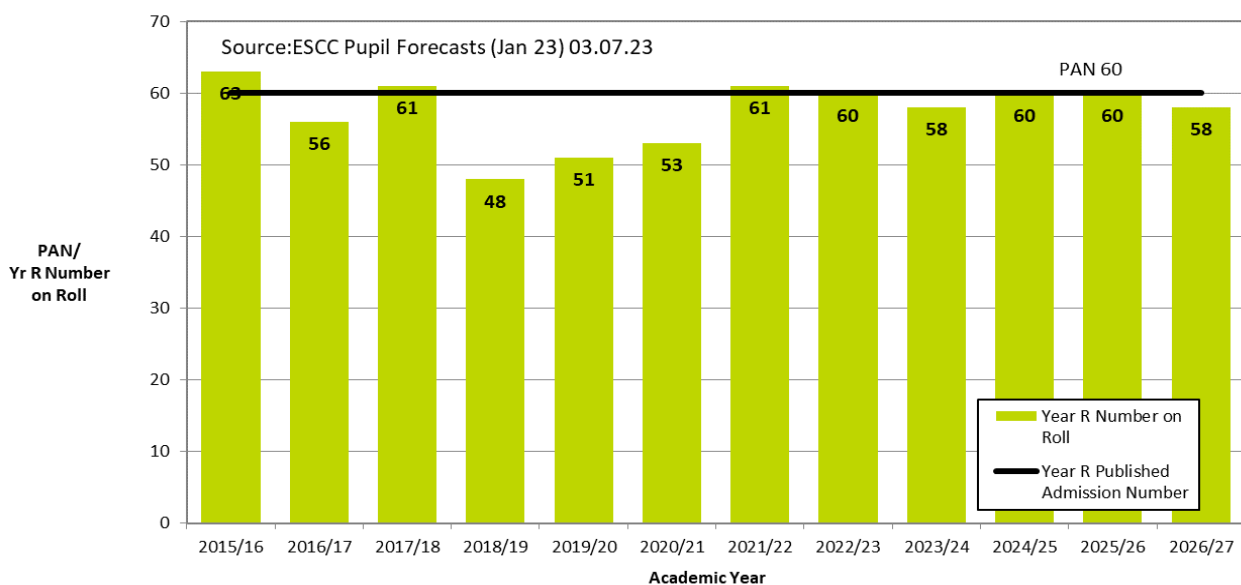
Primary places

Despite the number of new homes being planned in the period to 2027/28, Battle and Langton CE Primary School is forecast to remain within its Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60 for the foreseeable future. Marginal shortfalls across several year groups are, however, possible.

The school takes significant numbers of children from Hastings. There are also inflows from Bexhill and the surrounding area.

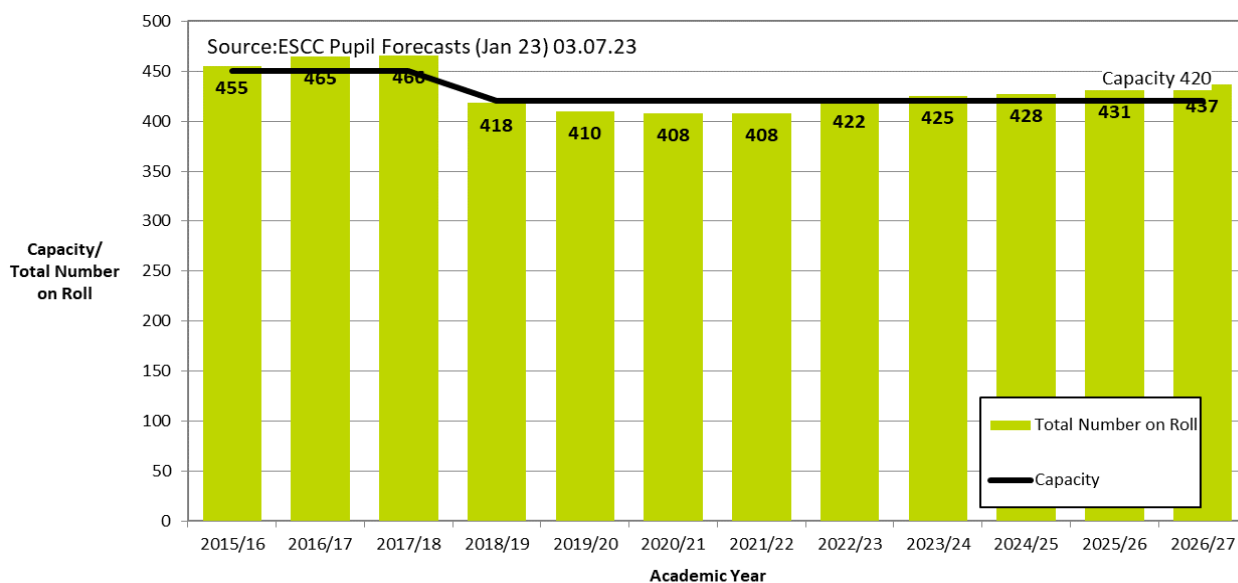
Any future increases in local demand should be able to be offset by the school admission system restricting inflows of children from other areas, notably Hastings, where necessary.

Battle primary Year R numbers



Overall numbers at Battle and Langton CE Primary School are forecast to remain fairly static during the plan period, with little, if any, spare capacity.

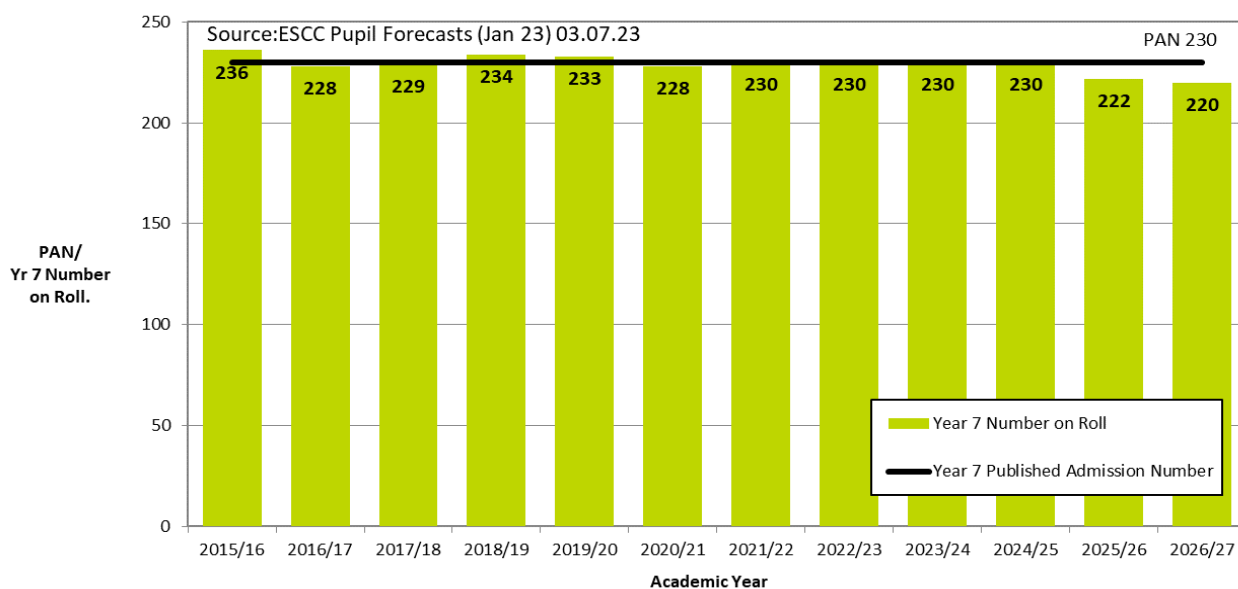
Battle total primary numbers



Secondary places

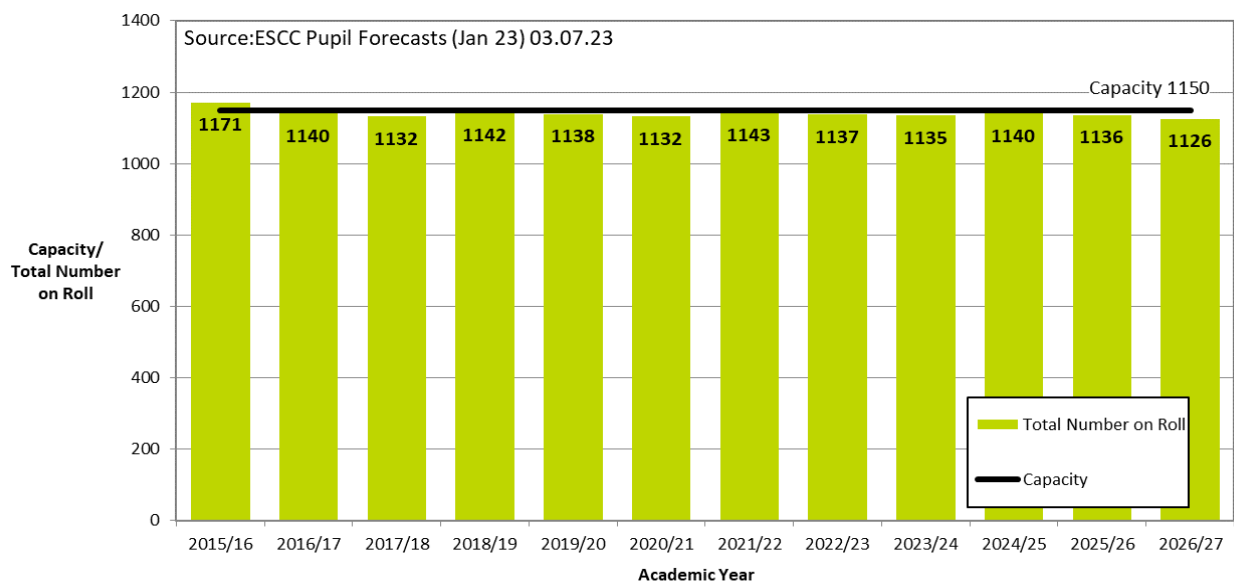
Claverham Community College takes significant numbers of children from Hastings and Bexhill. There are outflows of children from Battle to Robertsbridge Community College.

Claverham Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



The school has sufficient capacity to meet in-area demand. Provided it continues to be popular with out of area children it is likely to be close to full in most years.

Claverham Community College total secondary numbers



Wivelsfield Primary School

Rye and surrounding area

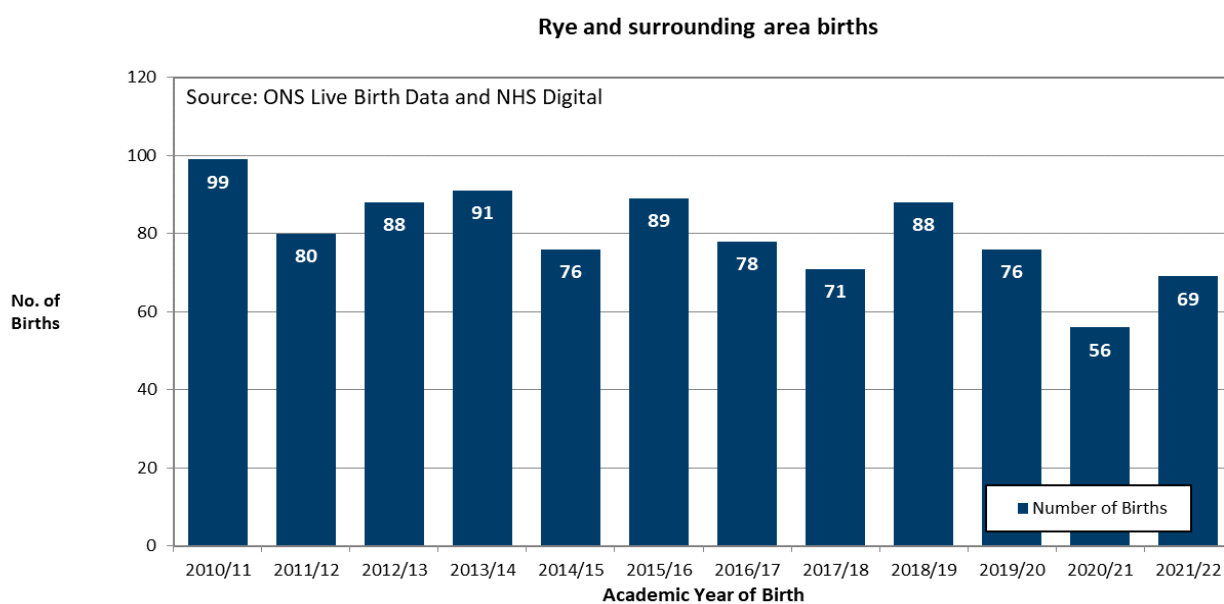
Schools

There are four primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Rye Community Primary School	2-11	Academy
Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
St Michael's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
St Thomas' Church of England Aided Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Secondary		
Rye College	11-16	Academy

Births

Births in the area tend to fluctuate from year to year, but overall, the trend has been downward since 2010/11. Births in 2020/21 were particularly low.



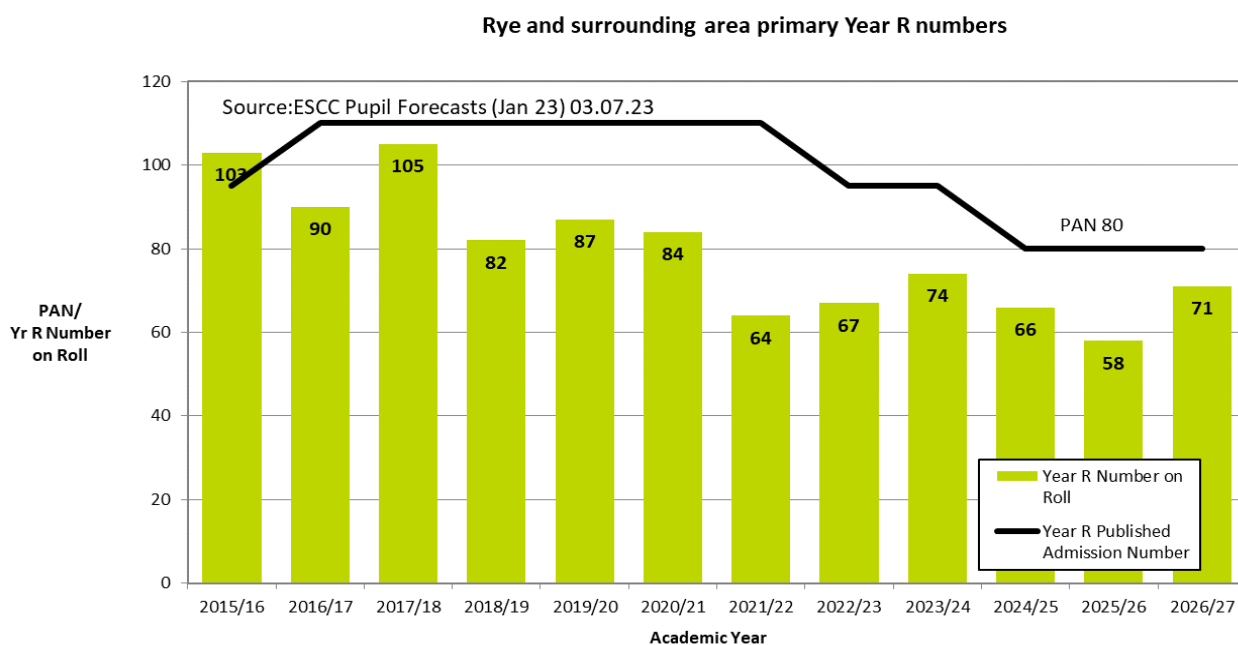
Housing plans

Rother District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 200 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2027/28. Rother District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

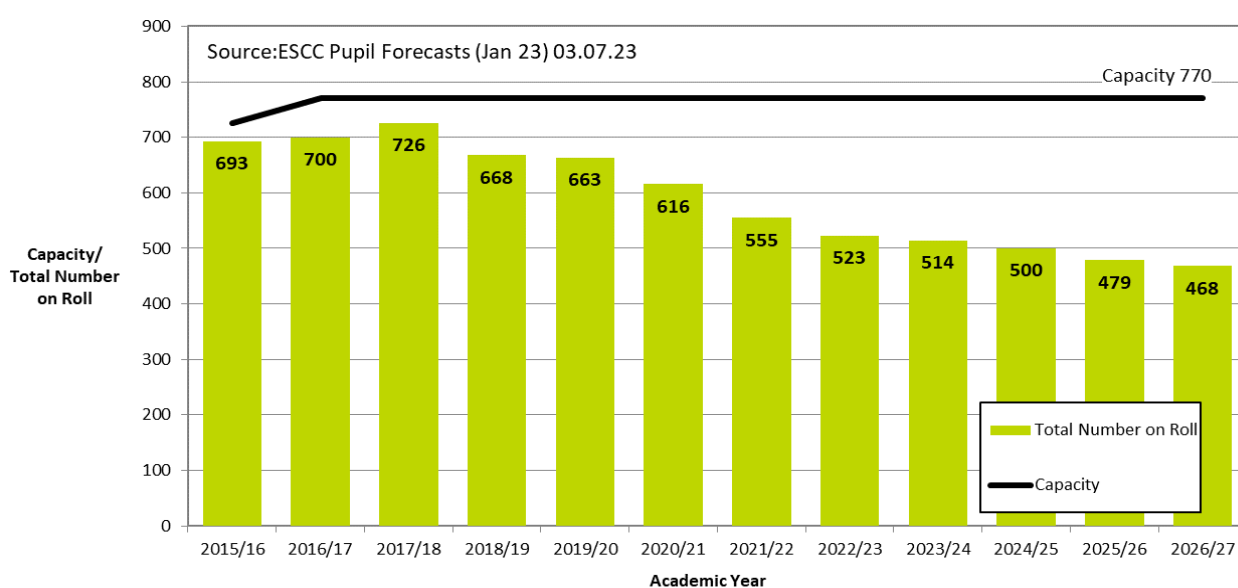
In recent years there has been a movement of pupils away from Rye Community Primary School to the three surrounding schools. This has impacted on pupil numbers at the school, which are low when compared to its capacity.

Lower births in the area have resulted in intakes well below the current combined Published Admission Number (PAN) of 95 for the four schools.



If intake numbers turn out to be as low as forecast, by 2026/27 surplus places in the area could be as high as 39% of capacity. Two schools in the area have 25% or more surplus places.

Rye and surrounding area total primary numbers



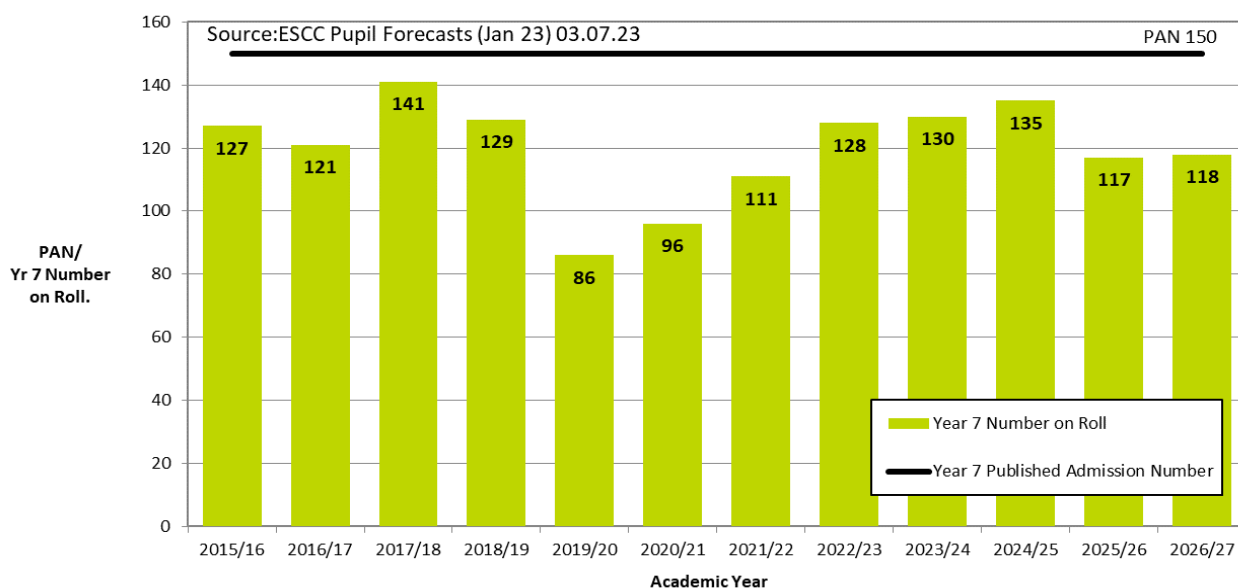
Reflecting the lower demand for places at Rye Community Primary School, the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust took a decision earlier this year to reduce the PAN at the school from 45 to 30 with effect from 2024/25 to manage surplus places in the school. Accommodation will not be removed and can be brought back into use when pupil numbers start to rise again.

Secondary places

Rye College traditionally has in-area numbers well below its PAN and has relied on attracting children from Hastings and across the border in Kent, notably Homewood School.

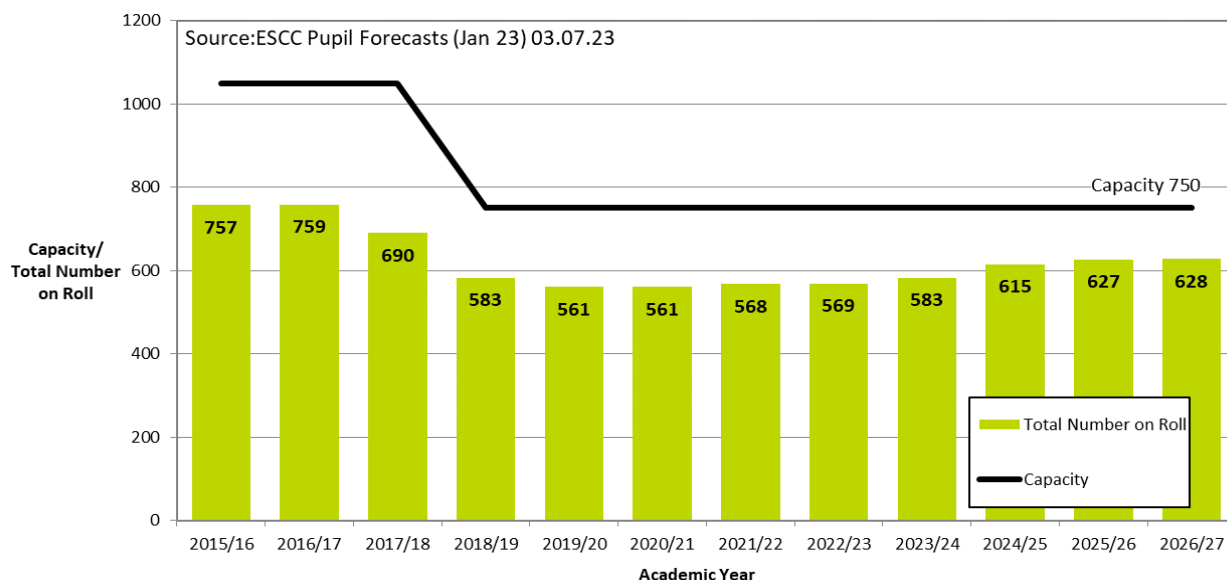
Higher in-area numbers in Hastings and pressures and PAN reductions in schools in Kent mean that Rye College's Year 7 intake numbers are forecast to be reasonably high until 2024/25. Beyond that point, lower numbers coming through Year 6 in the area and in Hastings could result in lower Year 7 intakes.

Rye and surrounding area secondary Year 7 numbers



With higher Year 7 intakes in recent years and forecast until at least 2024/25, the level of surplus places at Rye College should fall from 24% in 2022/23 to 16% by the end of the plan period.

Rye and surrounding area total secondary numbers



Rural Rother

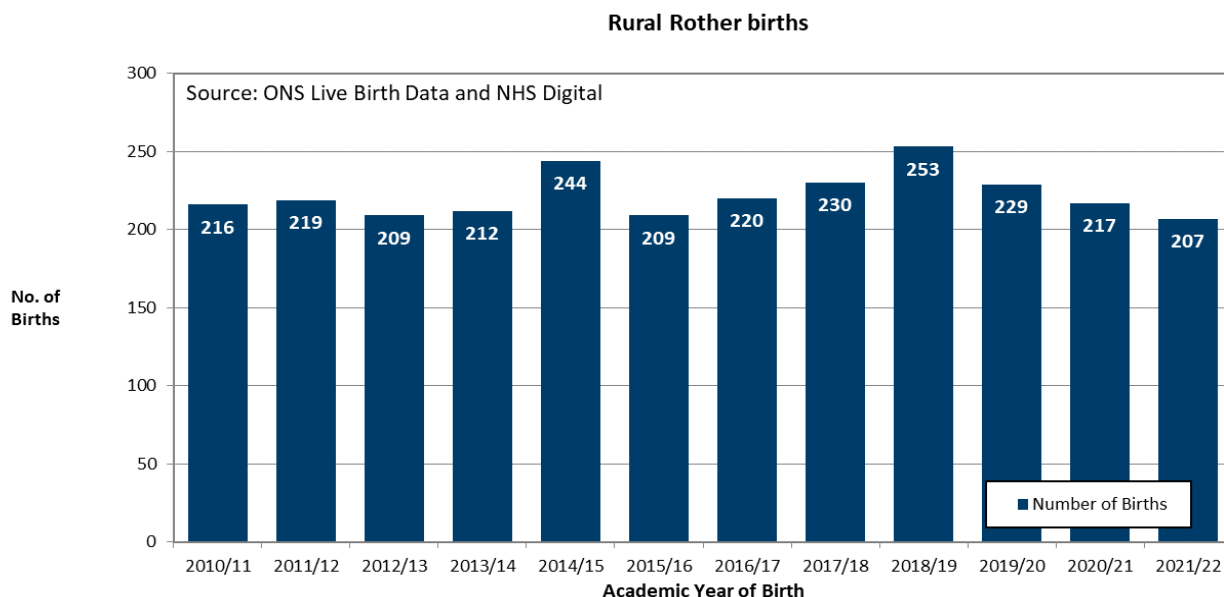
Schools

There are 18 primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Four primary schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Beckley Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Bodiam Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Brede Primary School	4-11	Community
Burwash CofE School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Crowhurst CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Dallington Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Etchingham Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Guestling Bradshaw Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Hurst Green Church of England Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Academy
Icklesham Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Netherfield CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Northiam Church of England Primary School and Nursery	2-11	Academy
Salehurst Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Sedlescombe CofE Primary School	4-11	Academy
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Stonegate Church of England Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Westfield School	4-11	Community
Secondary		
Robertsbridge Community College	11-16	Community

Births

Following a rise in births in 2018/19, numbers in the last three years have fallen back to levels more normally seen in rural Rother.



Housing plans

Rother District Council provides the local authority with housing growth data on an annual basis which feeds into our pupil forecasts and means we can make assumptions about the likely pupil yield from new and planned housing developments. In January 2023, an estimated 800 new homes remain to be built in the area during the Local Plan period to 2027/28. Approximately 200 of these are in Robertsbridge and 100 in Westfield Parish. Rother District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

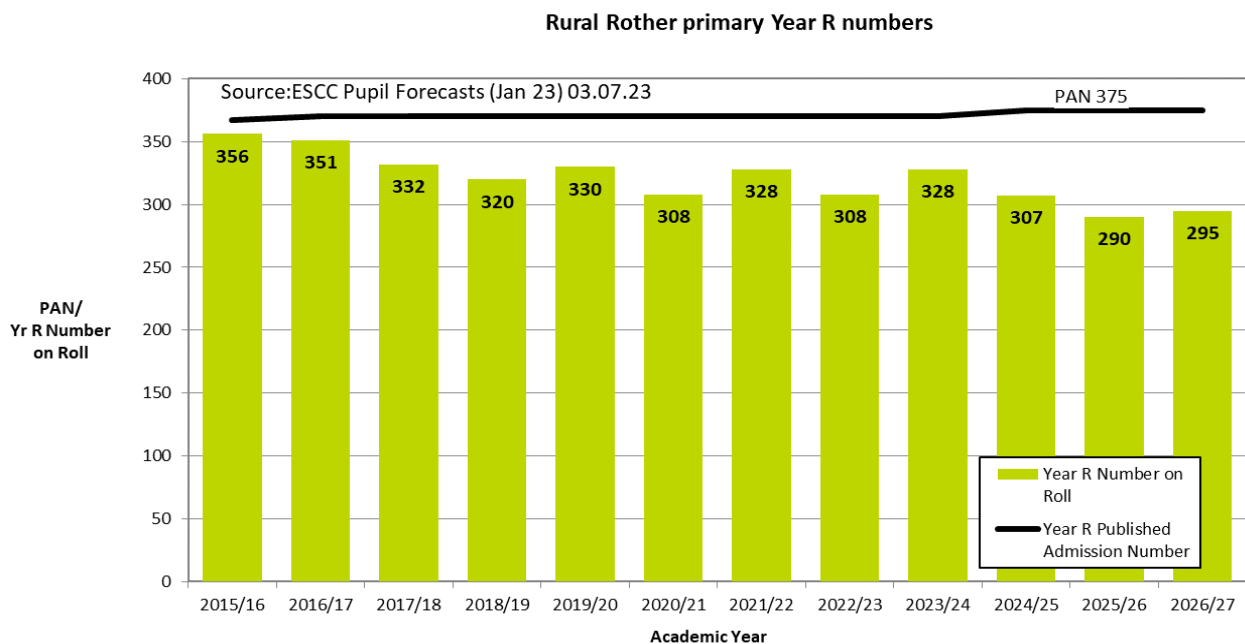
Primary places

The 375 reception (Year R) places in the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future. However, the picture will vary between individual rural areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate significantly from year to year since the size of the cohorts of children living in small geographical areas sometimes

differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise year-on-year to accommodate these fluctuations.

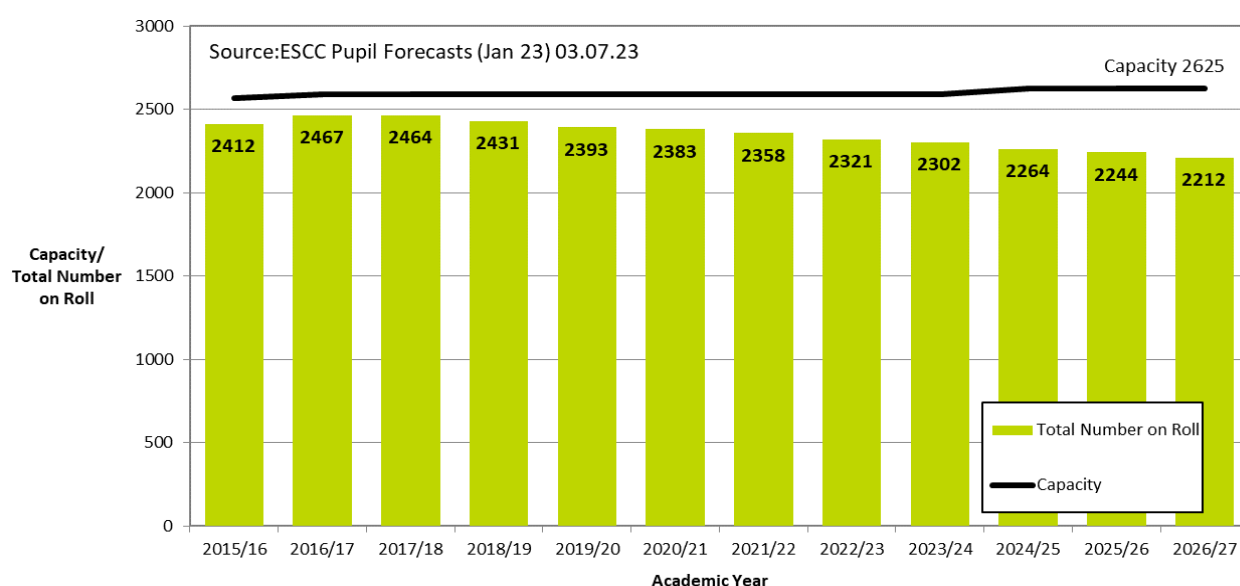
The following primary schools all take significant numbers of children from Hastings: Crowhurst CE Primary School, Guestling-Bradshaw CE Primary School, Icklesham CE Primary School, Netherfield CE Primary School, Sedlescombe CE Primary School, and Westfield School. Falling pupil outflows from Hastings, because of lower numbers there, may result in some of these schools not filling as they normally do.

The Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT) has approved an increase Northiam CE Primary School's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 15 to 20 with effect from the 2024/25 academic year.



Surplus places in the area are likely to grow from 10% in 2022/23 to 16% by 2026/27. Two schools in the area have 25% or more surplus capacity.

Rural Rother total primary numbers



The local authority will continue to monitor the increasing level of surplus places in the area.

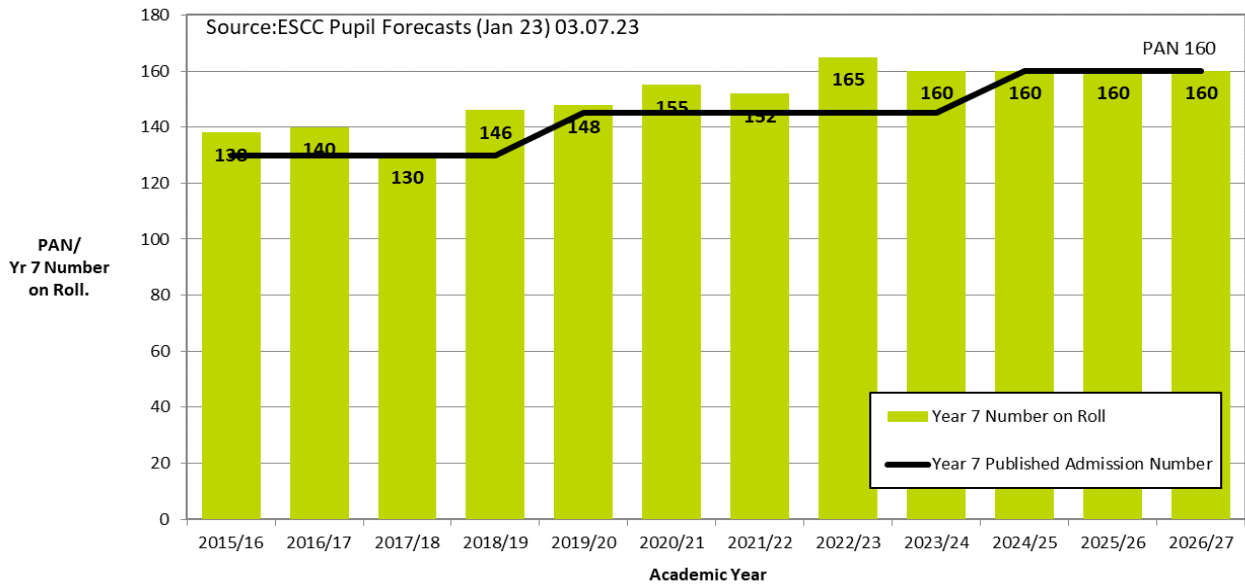
Secondary places

Robertsbridge Community College takes significant numbers of children from Hastings. There are also net inflows of children from Battle and the surrounding area and net outflows to Uplands Academy.

The school has more than sufficient places to meet in-area demand. For 2022/23 and 2023/24, the school went over its PAN to help alleviate pressures from other areas, notably Hastings and Kent.

Based on current preference patterns, it is forecast that Year 7 will be full or close to full for the foreseeable future, but this to a large extent hinges on its continuing popularity with out of area applicants.

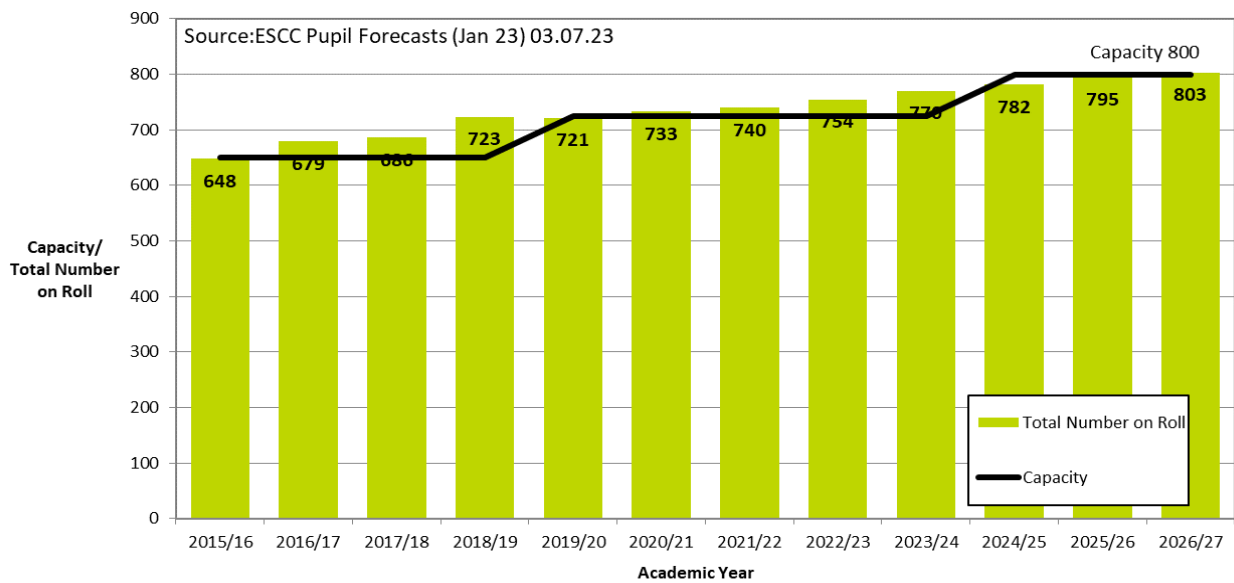
Robertsbridge Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



Reflecting its current popularity, the local authority has approved an increase to the school's PAN from 145 to 160 to take effect from the 2024/25 academic year.

The school is forecast to be at or close to capacity in the coming years.

Robertsbridge Community College total secondary numbers



Crowborough and surrounding area

Schools

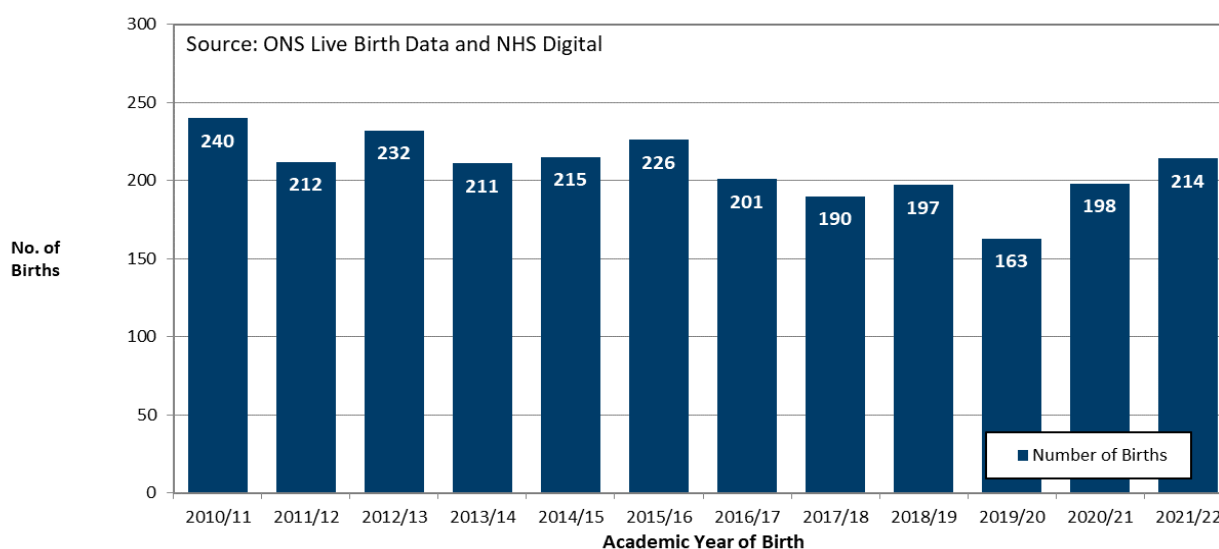
There are six primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision. The secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Ashdown Primary School	4-11	Community
Jarvis Brook Primary School	2-11	Academy
Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School	4-11	Academy
St John's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Marys Catholic Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Rotherfield Primary School	4-11	Community
Secondary		
Beacon Academy	11-18	Academy

Births

Births in the area have tended to fluctuate year-on-year, although the overall trend has been downwards since 2010/11. 2019/20 was a particularly low year for births.

Crowborough and surrounding area births



Housing plans

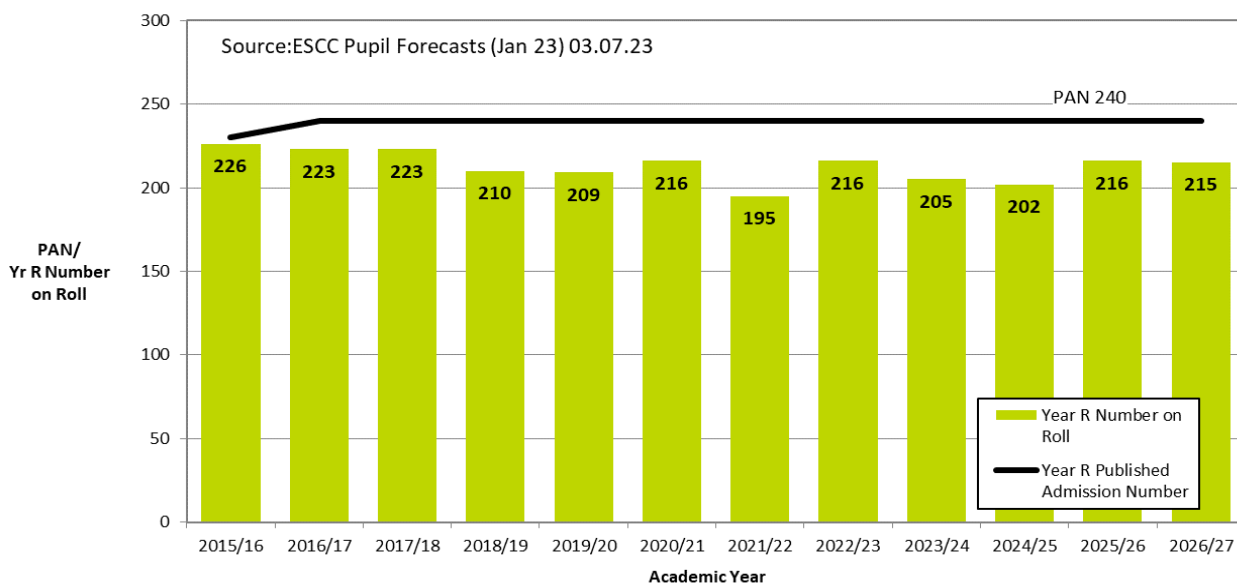
Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

Based on birth and GP registration data, for the foreseeable future, reception (Year R) numbers in the area are likely to fall well below the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 240.

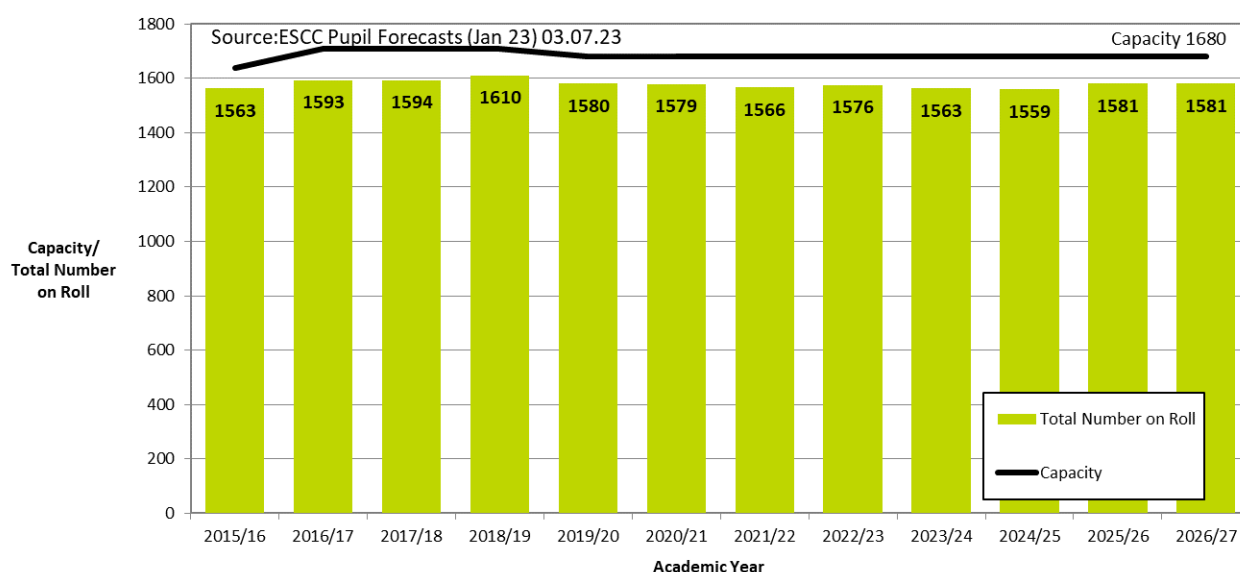
A number of children from the area currently attend surrounding schools, most notably High Hurstwood CE Primary School.

Crowborough and surrounding area primary Year R numbers



Surplus places in the area currently stand at 6% of capacity and are unlikely to change significantly over the plan period. One school in the area has 25% or more surplus places.

Crowborough and surrounding area total primary numbers



Secondary places

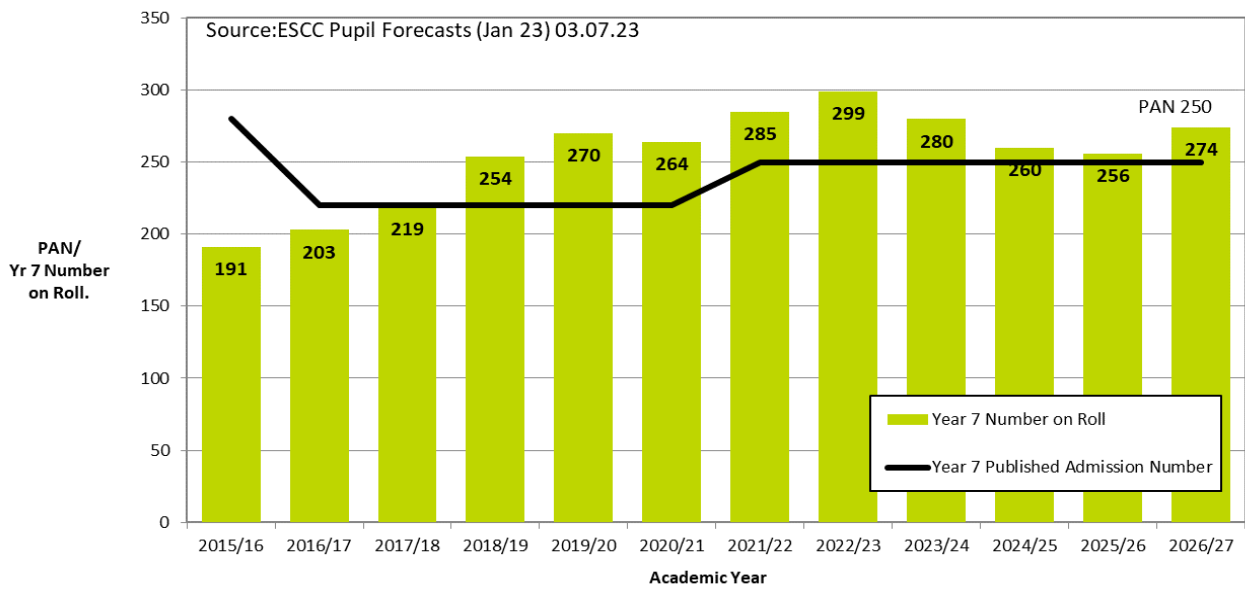
A number of children from the village of Forest Row, in the joint admissions area for Beacon Academy and Chailey School, traditionally receive offers of places at Sackville School and Imberhorne School in East Grinstead, West Sussex. Rising pressure for places at those schools could mean more pupils requiring a place at Beacon Academy or at Chailey School. Beacon Academy is the closer school to Forest Row. However, numbers coming through Forest Row CE Primary are declining, with the cohorts leaving Year 6 in future predicted to be under 30.

Some children from Beacon Academy's area obtain places at Kent Grammar schools.

Beacon Academy increased its PAN to 250 in 2021/22. Even so, Year 7 numbers continue to exceed the PAN. The school's admissions policy for 2023/24 changed so priority is only given to siblings of children at the school who live 'in-area' rather than all siblings. This may help limit the numbers the school has to accommodate.

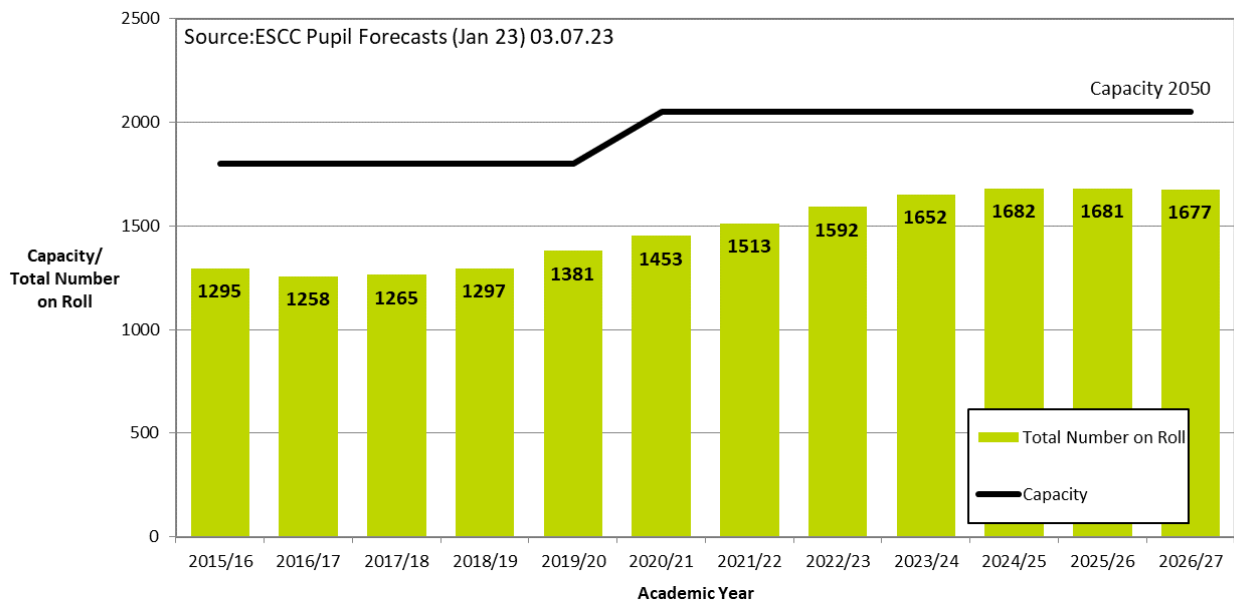
Nevertheless, while Year 7 numbers are not expected to be as high as they have been recently, due to Beacon Academy's popularity, in the short to medium term it may be difficult for the school to keep to a PAN of 250.

Beacon Academy secondary Year 7 numbers



Reflecting the higher Year 7 intakes, overall pupil numbers have increased notably at the school in recent years. In 2022/23, there were 23% more pupils on roll than in 2015/16.

Beacon Academy total secondary numbers



Hailsham and surrounding area

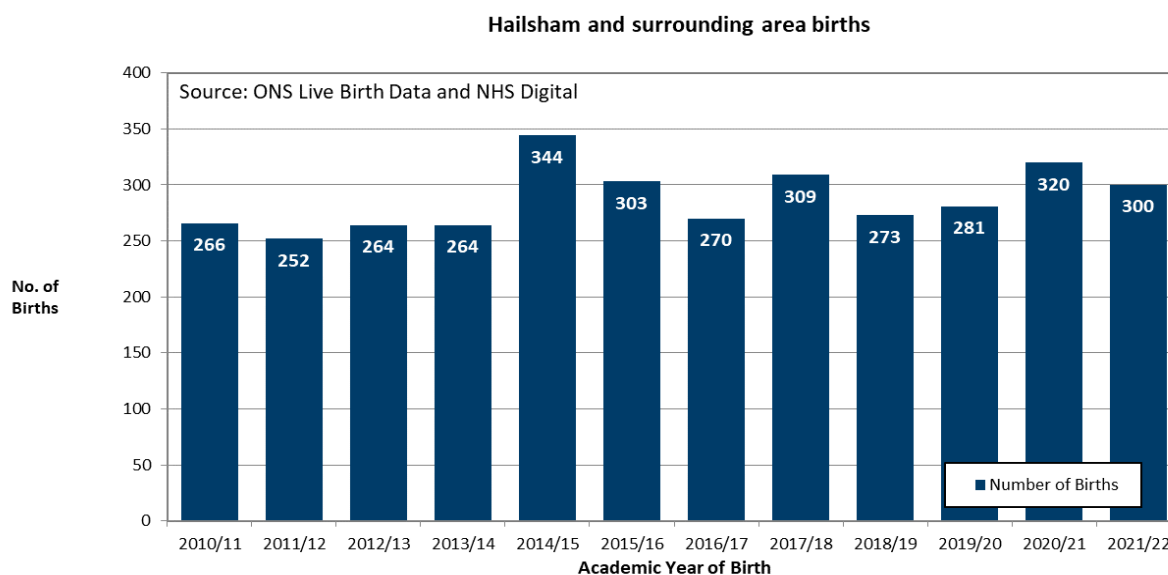
Schools

There are seven primary schools in the area and one all through school (primary, secondary and sixth form). Three schools have nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Burfield Academy	3-11	Academy
Grovelands Community Primary School	2-11	Foundation
Hawkes Farm Academy	4-11	Academy
Hellingly Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Phoenix Academy	4-11	Academy
White House Academy	4-11	Academy
Park Mead Primary School	4-11	Community
All-through		
Hailsham Community College	2-18	Academy

Births

Although fluctuating year-on-year, births in the area have generally been higher in recent years, reflecting the significant number of new homes that have been built in Hailsham in recent years.



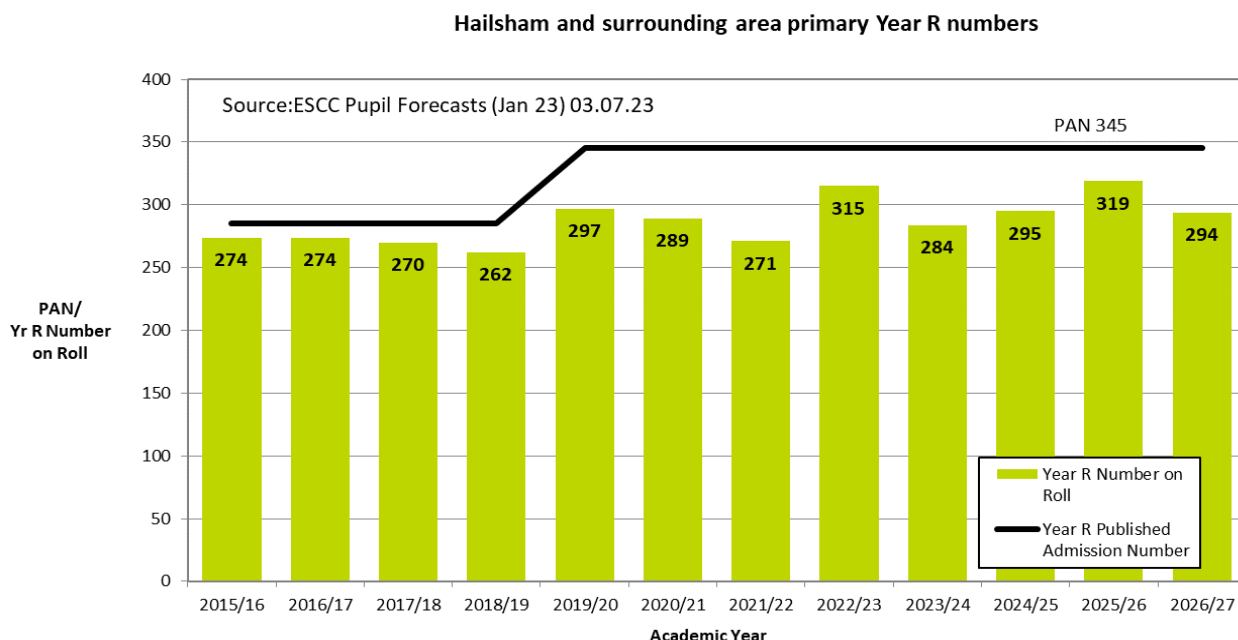
Housing plans

Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

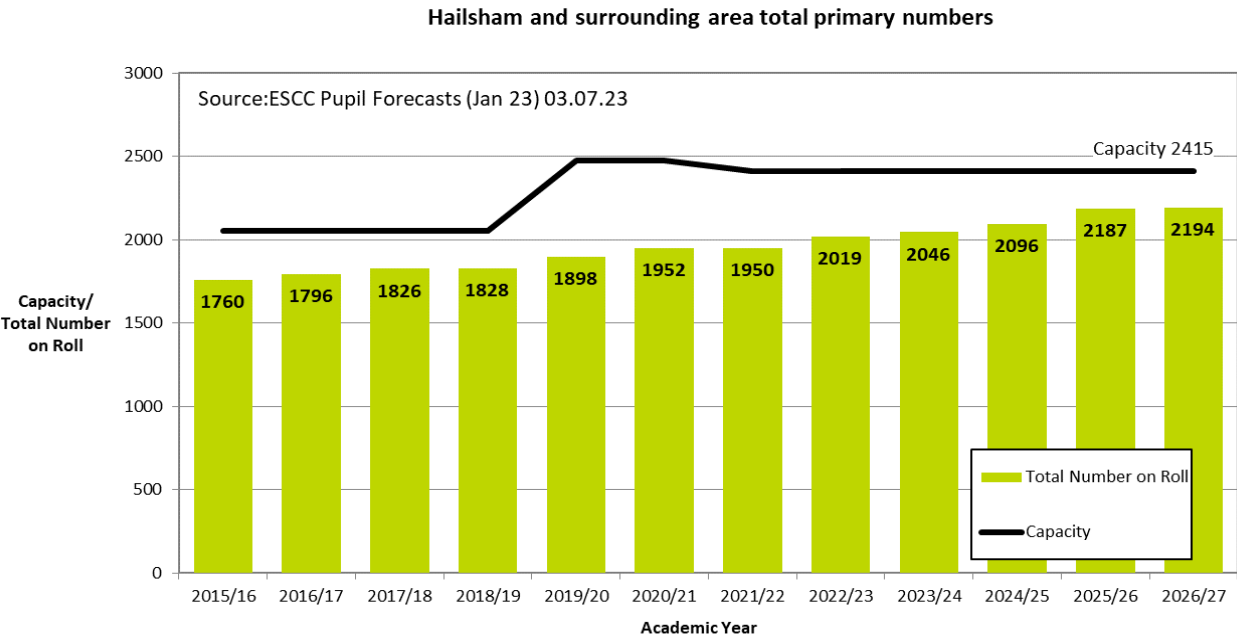
Around 2,200 units of new housing have been completed in Hailsham over the past ten years, and this has significantly boosted pupil numbers in the area. However, high numbers of Hailsham families continue to opt for places in surrounding schools, notably Herstmonceux CE Primary School, Chiddingly Primary School, and schools in the Heathfield area. Therefore, reception (Year R) intakes in Hailsham have not been as high as originally predicted.

Once the general demographic trend for births turns upward again, we may well see a follow-on upward trend in Year R numbers in the area, but the timing of this is difficult to predict.



In 2022/23, surplus places in the town stood at 16%. However, this figure is inflated by the primary phase of Hailsham Community College which opened in 2019 with Year R

intakes only. Currently there are cohorts in Year R to Year 4. It will be 2025/2026 before the school has a cohort in each year group. One other school in the area has 25% or more surplus places.

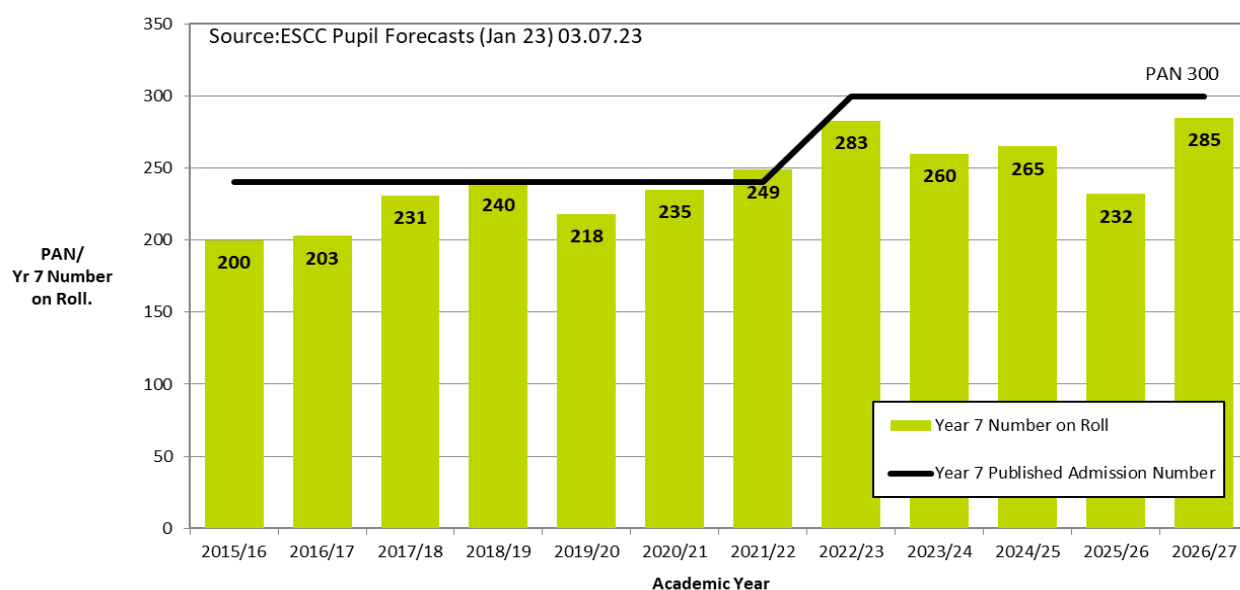


Secondary places

As a result of rising numbers coming through primary schools and additional pupils generated by the substantial volume of new housing being built in the town, Hailsham Community College is experiencing higher numbers of in-area children than it did previously.

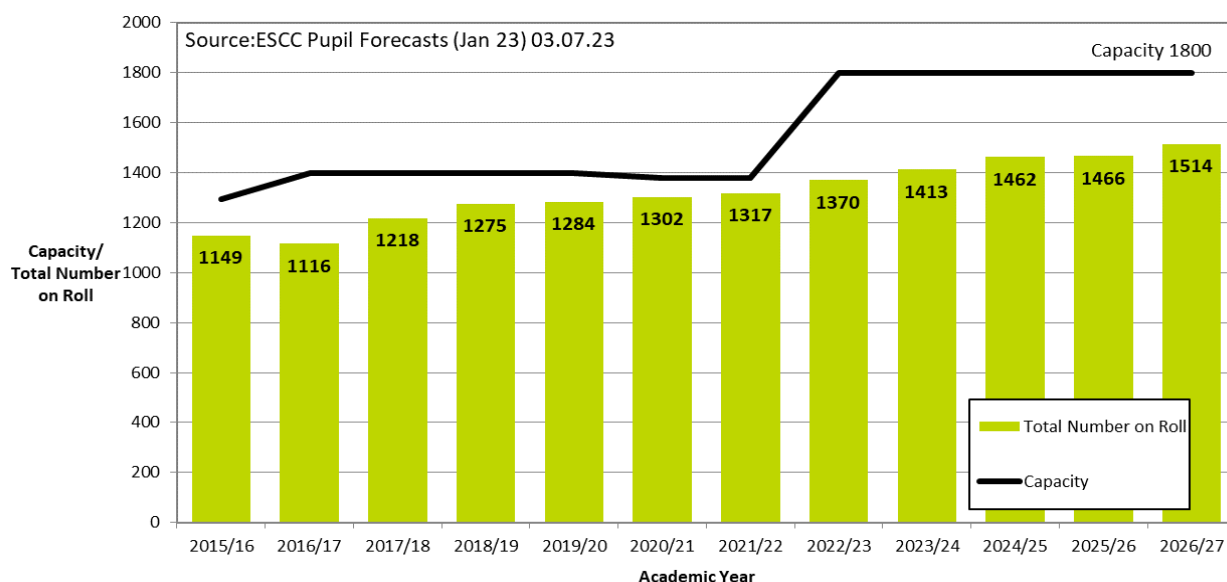
A substantial number of children from the area take up places at surrounding schools, notably Heathfield Community College, Kings Academy Ringmer, Willingdon Community School and schools in Eastbourne. Therefore, the exact magnitude of Year 7 intakes to Hailsham Community College will be heavily dependent on future patterns of parental preference and the availability of places in surrounding schools.

Hailsham Community College Academy Trust secondary Year 7 numbers



Surplus places stood at 24% of capacity in 2022/23. However, this figure is inflated by the recent expansion of the school's secondary phase with larger intakes filling from Year 7. By 2026/27, it is predicted that surplus places will have fallen to 16% of capacity.

Hailsham Community College Academy Trust total secondary numbers



Heathfield

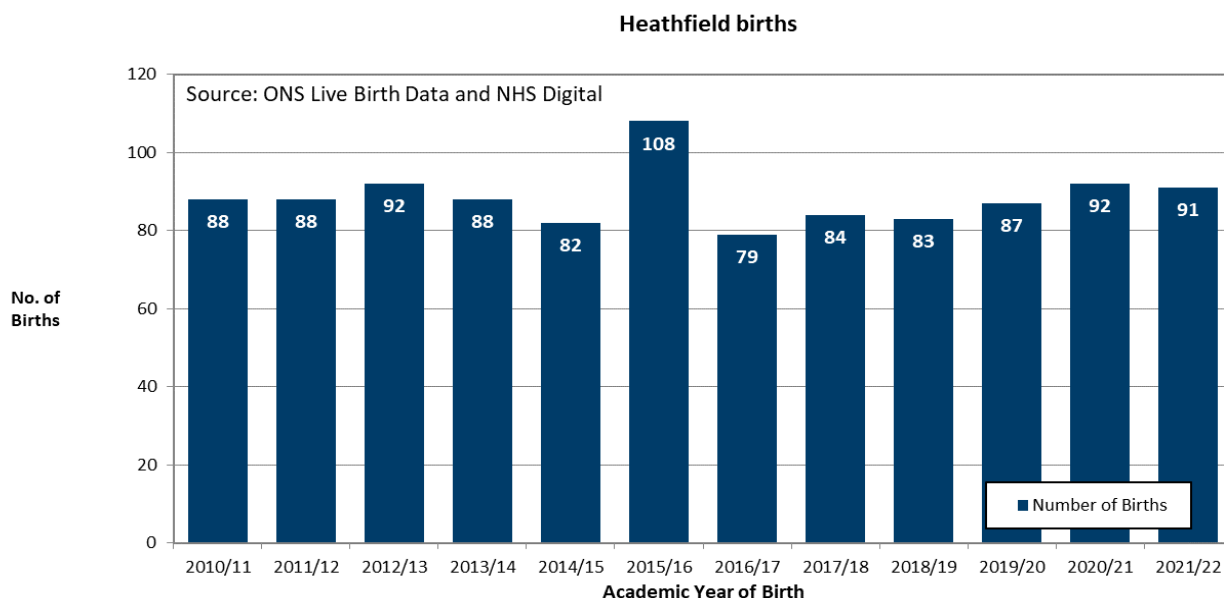
Schools

There are three primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision. The secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
All Saints' & St Richard's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Parkside Community Primary School	2-11	Community
Secondary		
Heathfield Community College	11-18	Community

Births

Apart from in 2015/16, births in the area have remained largely consistent for several years.



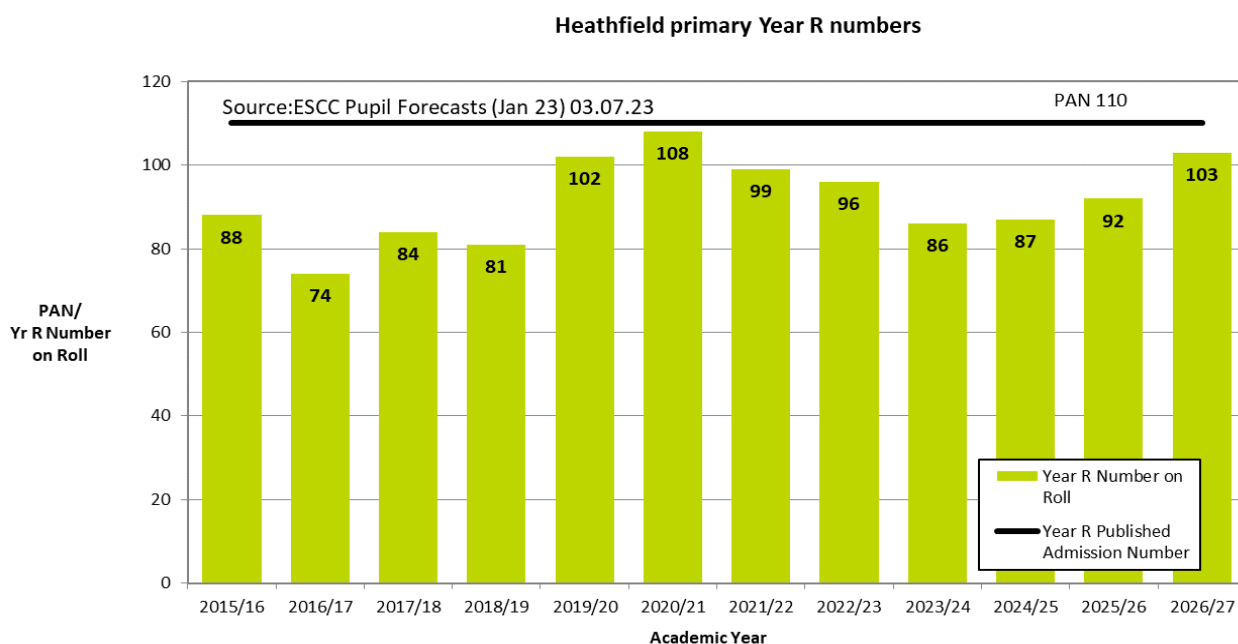
Housing plans

Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

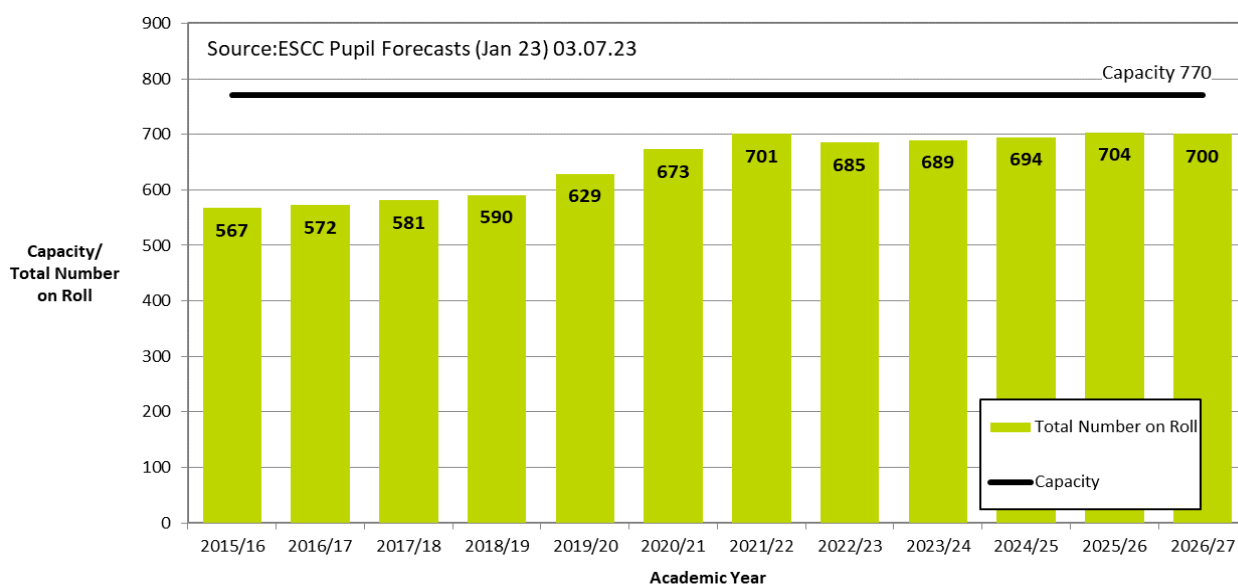
There is movement of children between Heathfield and the following schools: Maynard's Green Community Primary School, Punnetts Town Community Primary School, and schools in Hailsham.

Reception (Year R) numbers in Heathfield are forecast to remain within the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 110 for the foreseeable future.



Surplus places in the area are predicted to be between 9% and 10% of capacity for the duration of the plan period. One school has 25% or more surplus places.

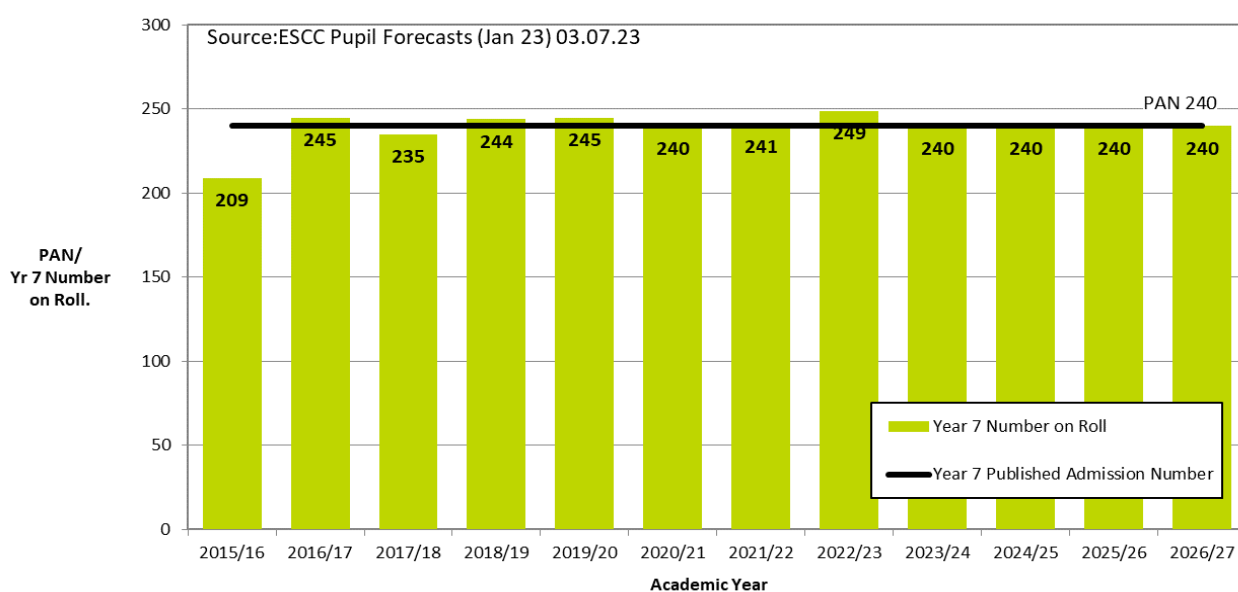
Heathfield total primary numbers



Secondary places

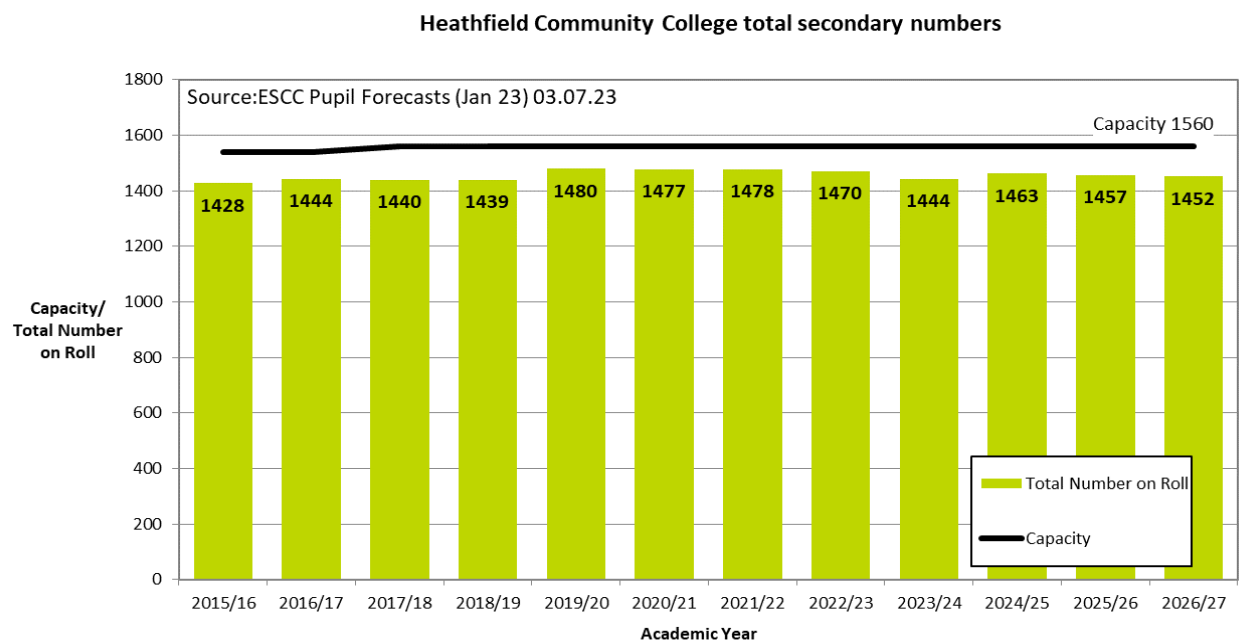
Heathfield Community College takes significant numbers of pupils from Hailsham and the surrounding area. With inflows of pupils from these areas, it is forecast that the school will continue to fill to its PAN for the foreseeable future.

Heathfield Community College secondary Year 7 numbers



Heathfield Community College has sufficient capacity to meet in-area demand. The potential for the school admissions system to redirect out of area applicants back to

Hailsham and other areas means that the school is unlikely to have to exceed its PAN in future years and will remain close to capacity with around 7% surplus places.



Polegate and Willingdon

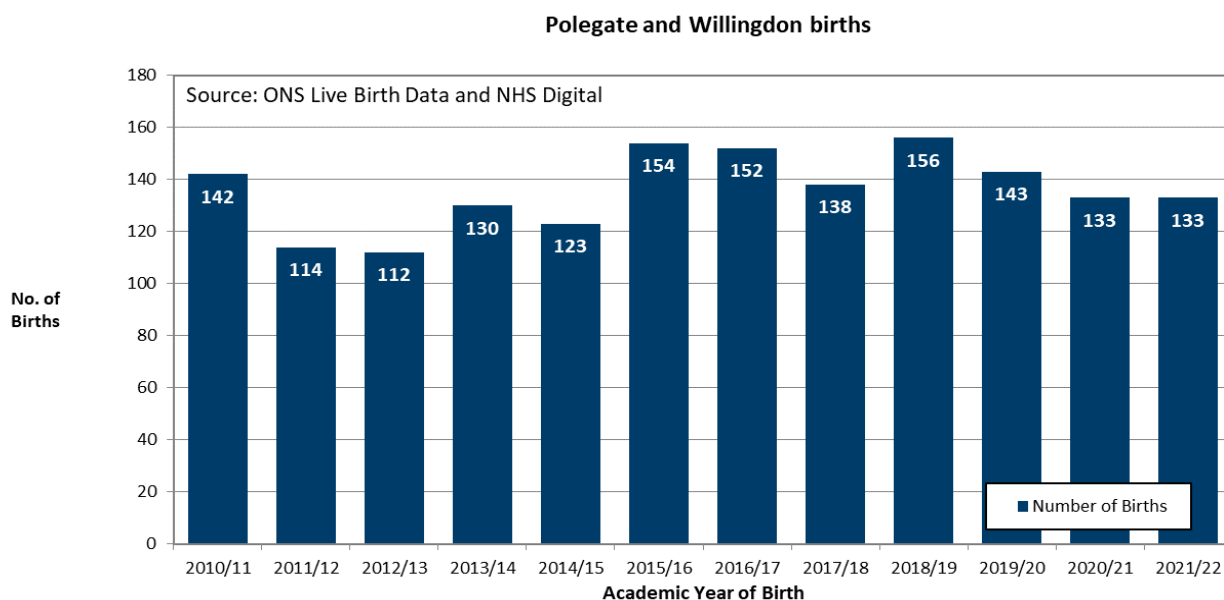
Schools

There are two primary schools in the area and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Polegate Primary School	2-11	Community
Willingdon Primary School	4-11	Community
Secondary		
Willingdon Community School	11-16	Community

Births

Births in the area peaked in 2018/19 and have since begun to fall.



Housing plans

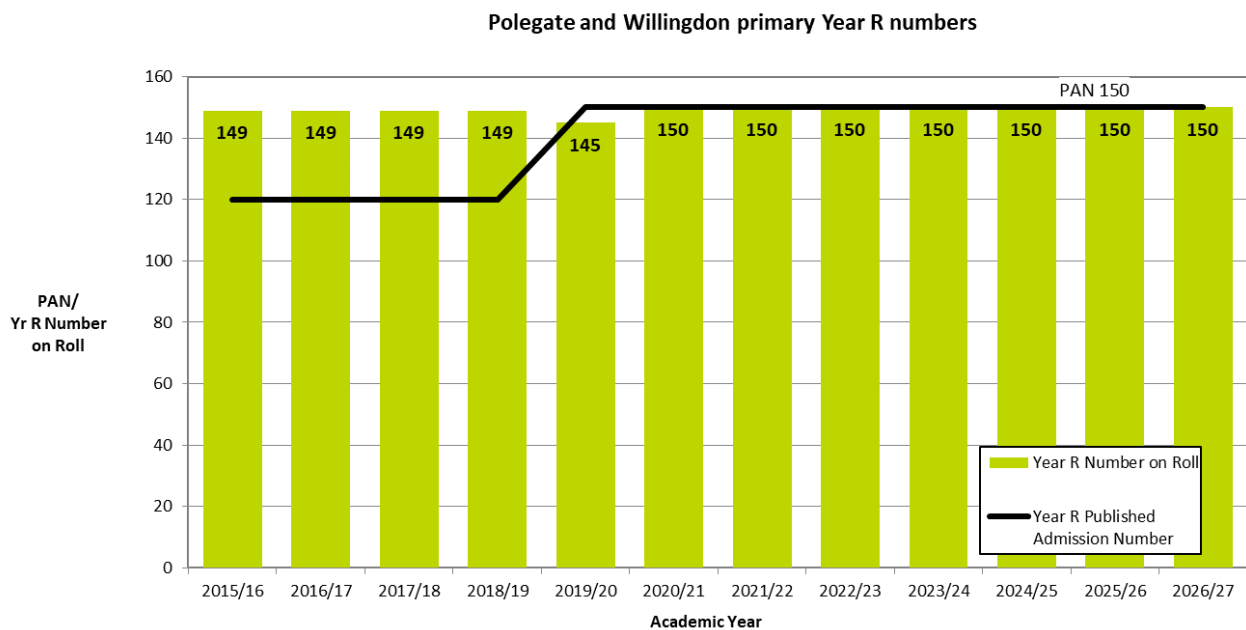
Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result,

future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

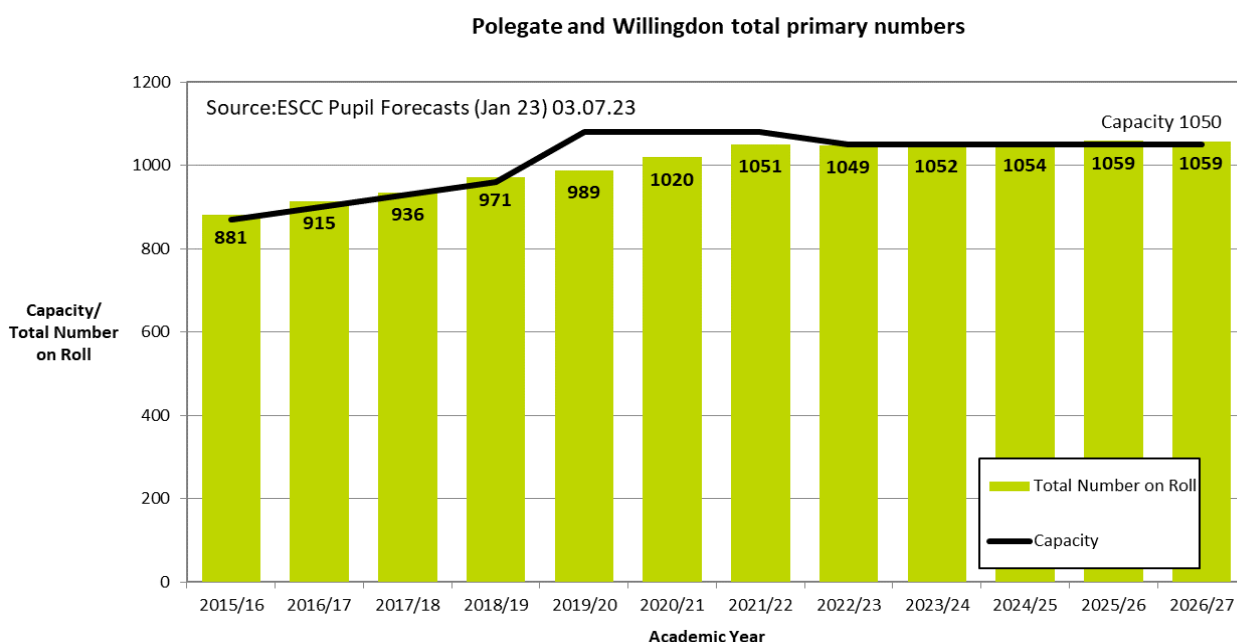
Primary places

There are significant flows of children to and from Polegate Primary School and Willingdon Primary School and schools in Eastbourne.

In the last seven years, high in-area numbers of reception (Year R) children linked to recent housing development has resulted in Year R totals at or around 150. Birth and GP registration data points to similar Year R numbers going forward to 2026/27.



Both Polegate Primary School and Willingdon Primary School are forecast to be at, or close to, capacity for the duration of the plan period.

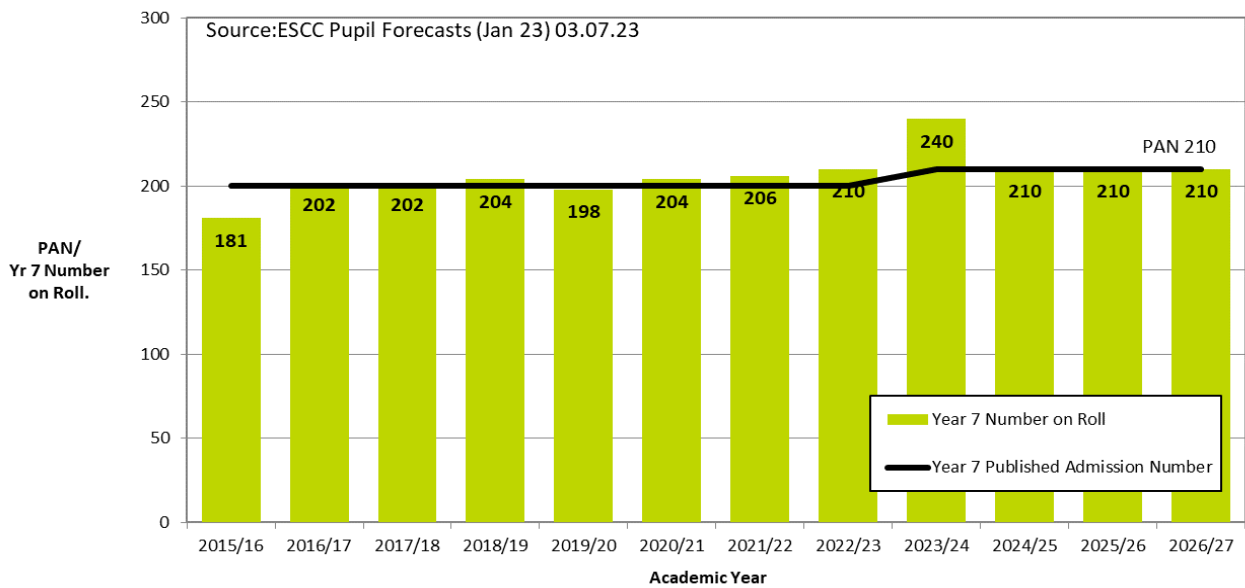


Secondary places

Linked to numbers coming through primary schools and the volume of recent housing development in the Polegate and Stone Cross areas, Willingdon Community School is likely to find it increasingly difficult to meet demand from all children within its admissions community area who wish to go there. The Willingdon Community School admissions area has a number of shared areas with two Eastbourne schools: The Turing School and The Eastbourne Academy. In some years, if Willingdon is to keep to its Published Admission Number (PAN), the school admissions system may have to direct a number of in-area applicants to the above schools.

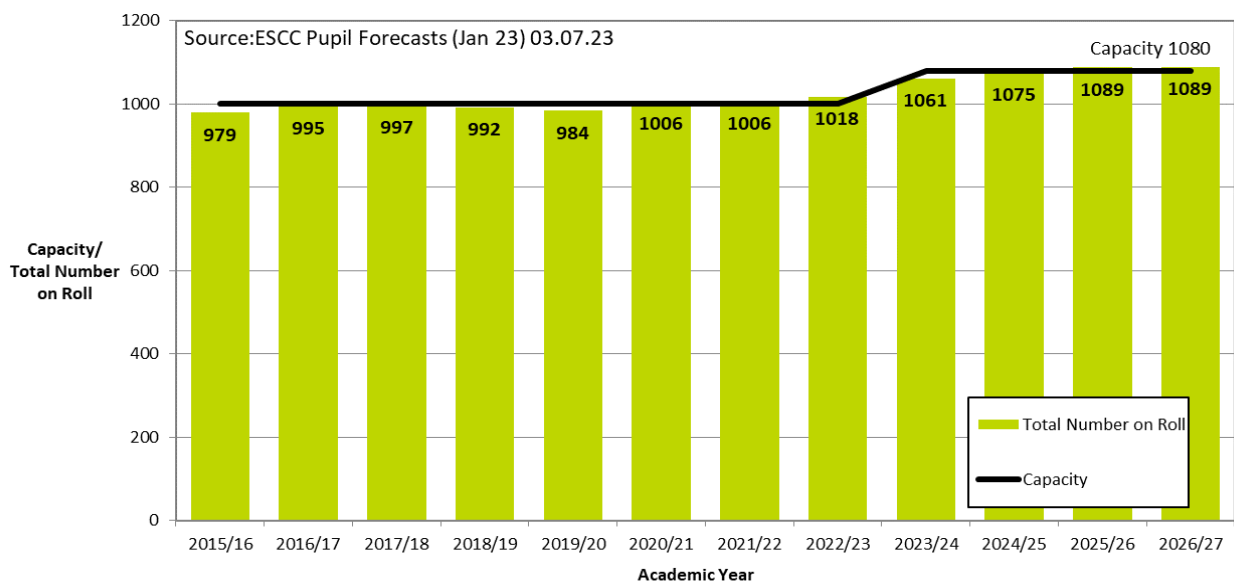
To address the increasing pressure on places at the school, the local authority approved a permanent increase to its PAN from 200 to 210, effective from 2023/24. In addition, we agreed with the school that it would temporarily admit up to 240 in 2023/24 to ensure there is sufficient immediate capacity in the wider Eastbourne and Willingdon area to accommodate the predicted high Year 7 numbers. Although not currently shown in the forecast, this will be repeated in 2024/25.

Willington Community School secondary Year 7 numbers



The school is likely to remain at, or close to, capacity during the plan period.

Willington Community School total secondary numbers



Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensy and Westham

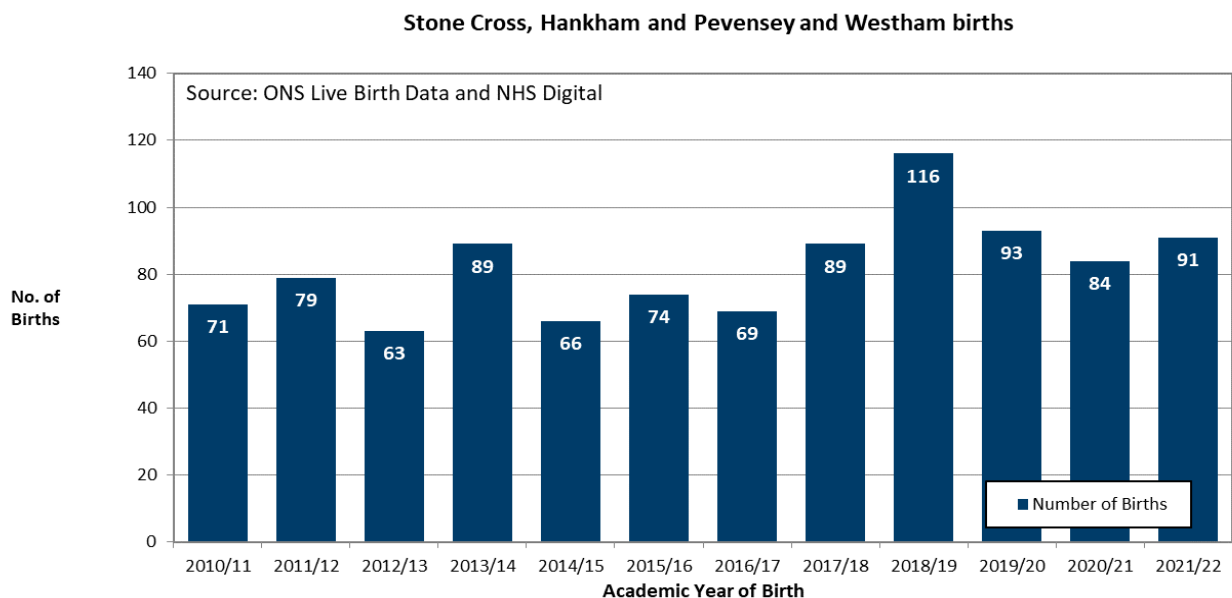
Schools

There are three primary schools in the area.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Hankham Primary School	4-11	Community
Pevensy and Westham CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Stone Cross School	4-11	Community

Births

Births in the area tend to fluctuate year-on-year, although numbers in recent years have been generally higher, linked to the volume of new housing in the area.



Housing plans

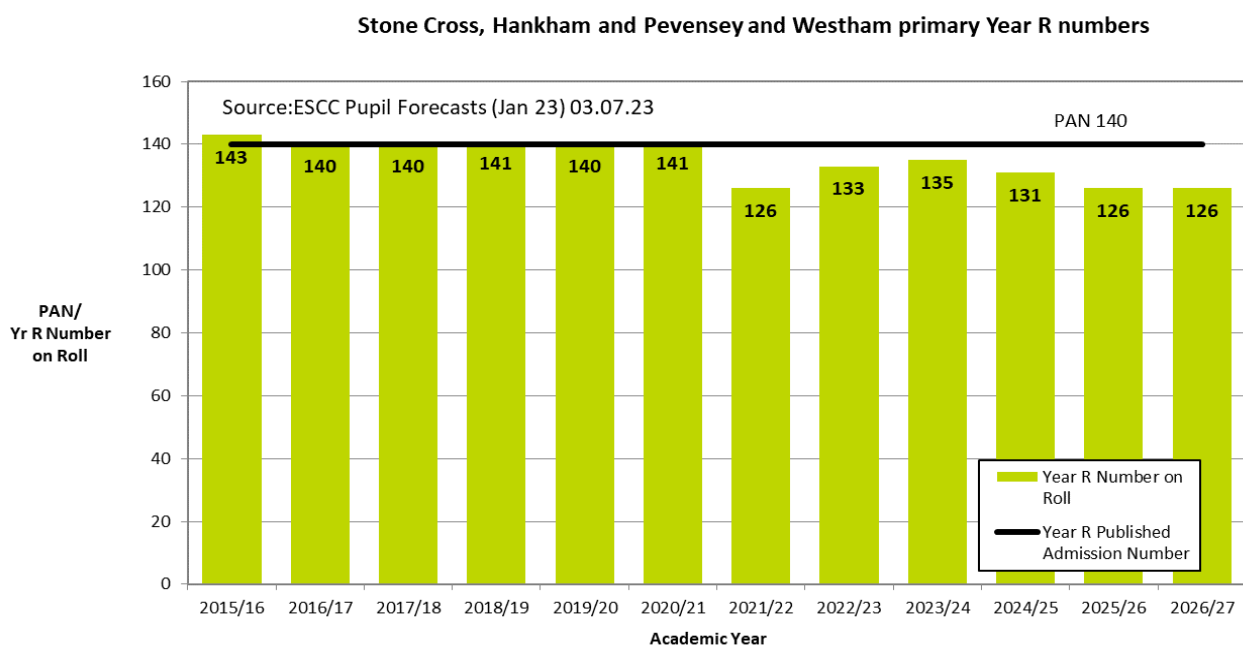
Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result,

future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

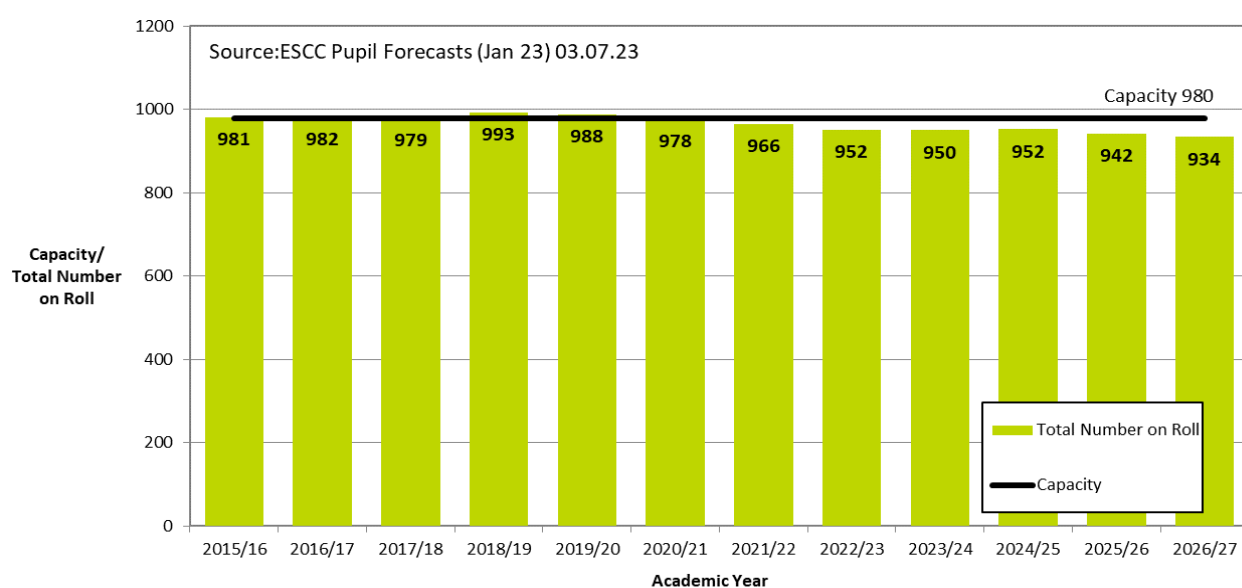
The past seven years have witnessed the building of nearly 700 dwellings in the area and this is resulting in larger numbers of in-area children coming through into reception (Year R).

The three schools take significant numbers of children from Eastbourne. In the short to medium term, the school admissions system should be able to redirect some of this demand back to Eastbourne, where future intake numbers are predicted to decline because of falling births, thereby ensuring sufficient places for local children.



The three schools, which have largely been full to now, are forecast to have a small number of spare places (5% of capacity) by 2026/27.

Stone Cross, Hankham and Pevensey and Westham total primary numbers



Uckfield and surrounding area

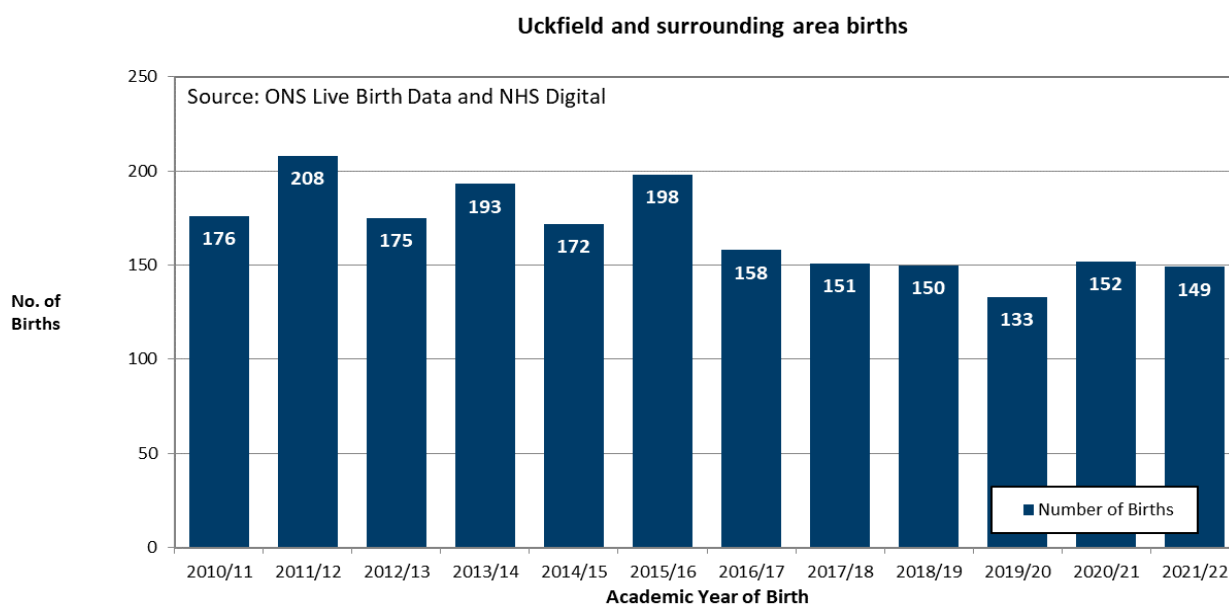
Schools

There are seven primary schools in the area and one secondary school. 1 primary school has nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Harlands Primary School	2-11	Community
Holy Cross Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Manor Primary School	4-11	Community
Rocks Park Primary School	4-11	Community
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Aided
Framfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Little Horsted Church of England Primary School	3-11	Voluntary Aided
Secondary		
Uckfield College	11-18	Community

Births

Births in Uckfield have fallen significantly in recent years, with 2019/20 being particularly low.



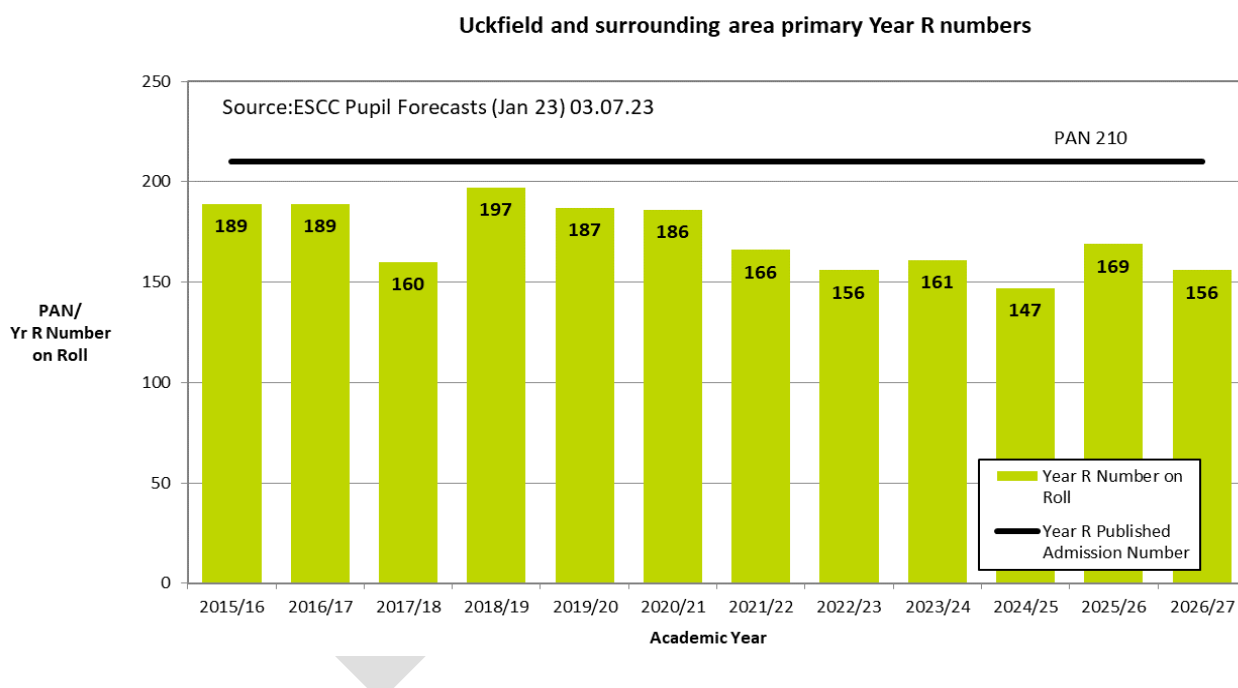
Housing plans

Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

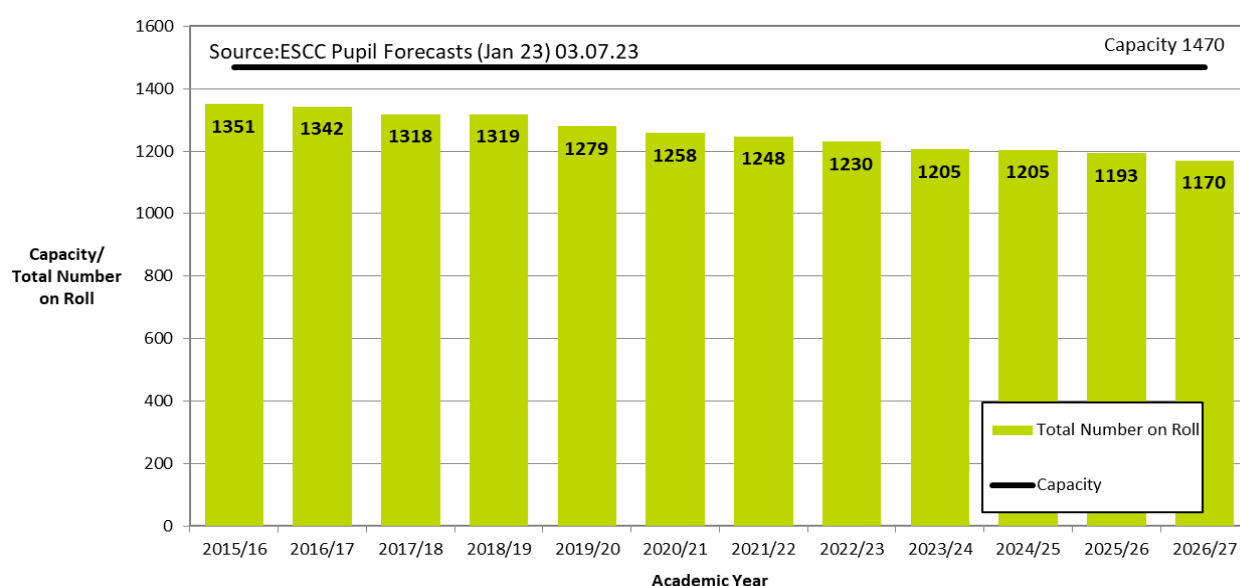
A number of children from the area currently attend surrounding schools, notably Bonners CE Primary School and Buxted CE Primary School.

Live birth and GP registration data are currently suggesting reception (Year R) numbers remaining low until at least 2026/27.



Surplus places in the area stood at 17% in 2022/23. Currently there is one school with more than 25% surplus places.

Uckfield and surrounding area total primary numbers



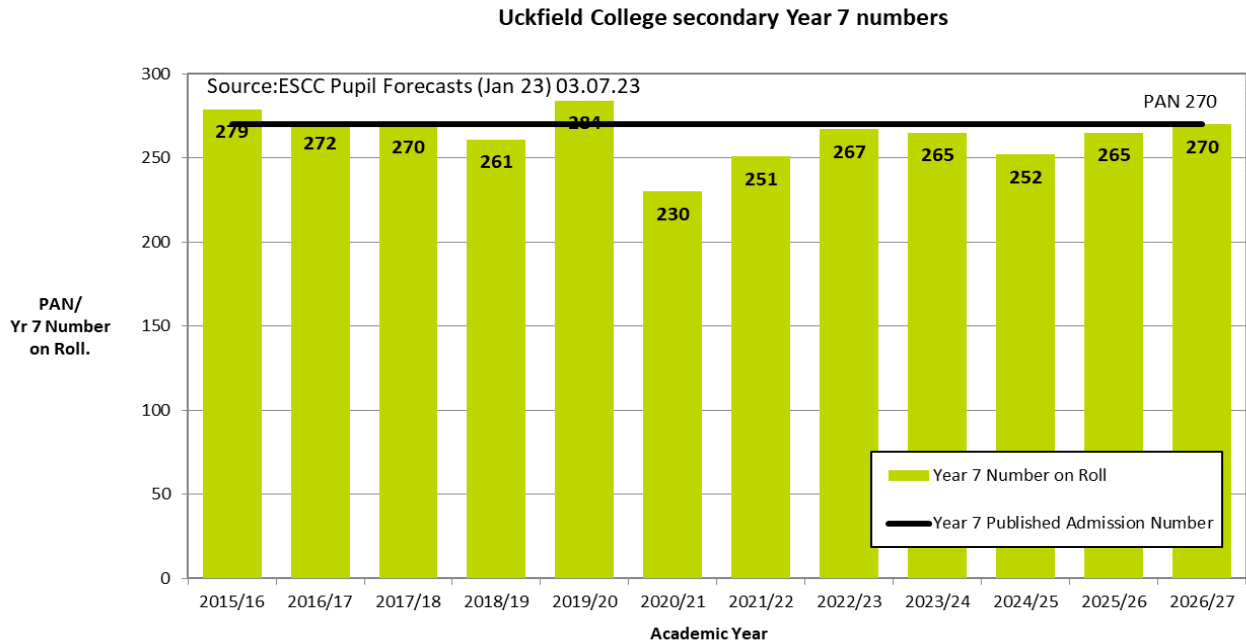
Following a period of consultation, the local authority's Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability took a decision on 11 September 2023 to publish a statutory proposal relating to the closure of Holy Cross CE Primary School. In recent years, the school has faced many challenges relating to leadership, retention of staff, quality of provision and low pupil numbers. At the start of the 2023/24 academic year there were 13 children on roll. The statutory proposal was published on 22 September 2023 and was followed by a four-week period of representation. A final decision on the proposal will be taken at the Lead Member meeting on 14 November 2023. If approved, the school would close on 31 December 2023.

In the medium to long term, the development of 1,000 new homes at Ridgewood Farm, Uckfield is likely to generate a significant number of school age children. The local authority has an option agreement on land for new school provision to serve the development site and will bring forward proposals at the appropriate time. To a large extent the timing of this will be dependent upon when the school site is transferred by the developer to the local authority and the demand for places in the area at that time.

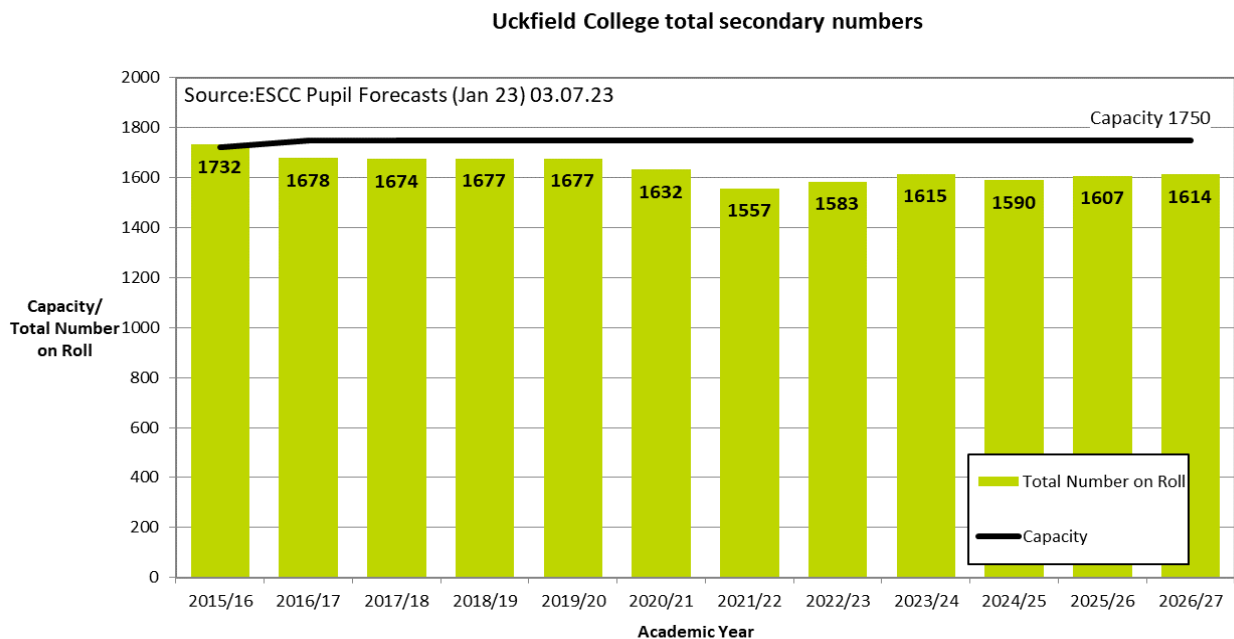
Secondary places

Uckfield College traditionally takes children from the Chailey and Ringmer areas. Conversely, children from Uckfield and the surrounding area access places at King's Academy, Ringmer as well as St Paul's Catholic College in West Sussex.

In the coming years, in-area numbers coming through primary schools will fluctuate. Actual Year 7 intake numbers each year will depend on the relative popularity of Uckfield College and schools in other areas.



Overall numbers on roll at Uckfield College are forecast to remain steady over the period to 2026/27, with surplus capacity of around 8%.



Rural Wealden

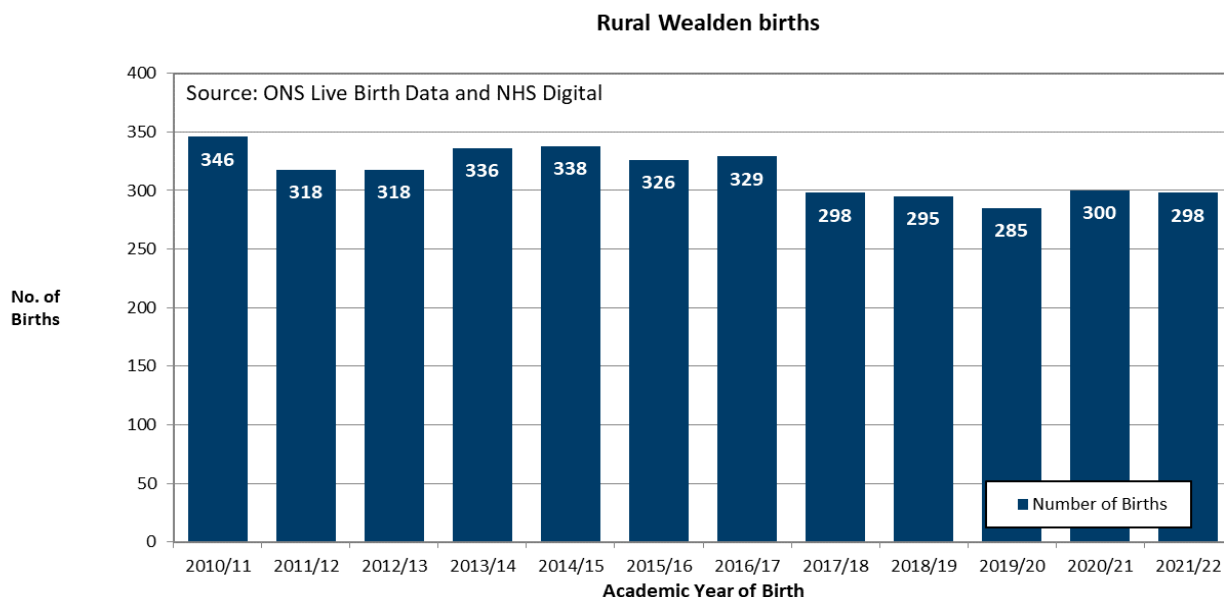
Schools

There are 24 primary schools in the area and one secondary school. Four primary schools have nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form.

School name	Age range	School type*
Primary		
Alfriston School	4-11	Community
Blackboys Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Bonnors CofE School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Buxted CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Chiddingly Primary School	4-11	Community
Danehill Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
East Hoathly CofE Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Five Ashes CofE Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Fletching Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Forest Row Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Frant Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Groombridge St Thomas' Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Laughton Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
Mayfield Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Maynards Green Community Primary School	4-11	Community
Nutley Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Controlled
Punnetts Town Community Primary School	2-11	Community
St Mark's Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School	4-11	Voluntary Aided
St Michael's Primary School	4-11	Community
Wadhurst CofE Primary School	2-11	Voluntary Controlled
Secondary		
Uplands Academy	11-18	Academy

Births

Births across rural Wealden have been lower in recent years than levels previously seen in the area.



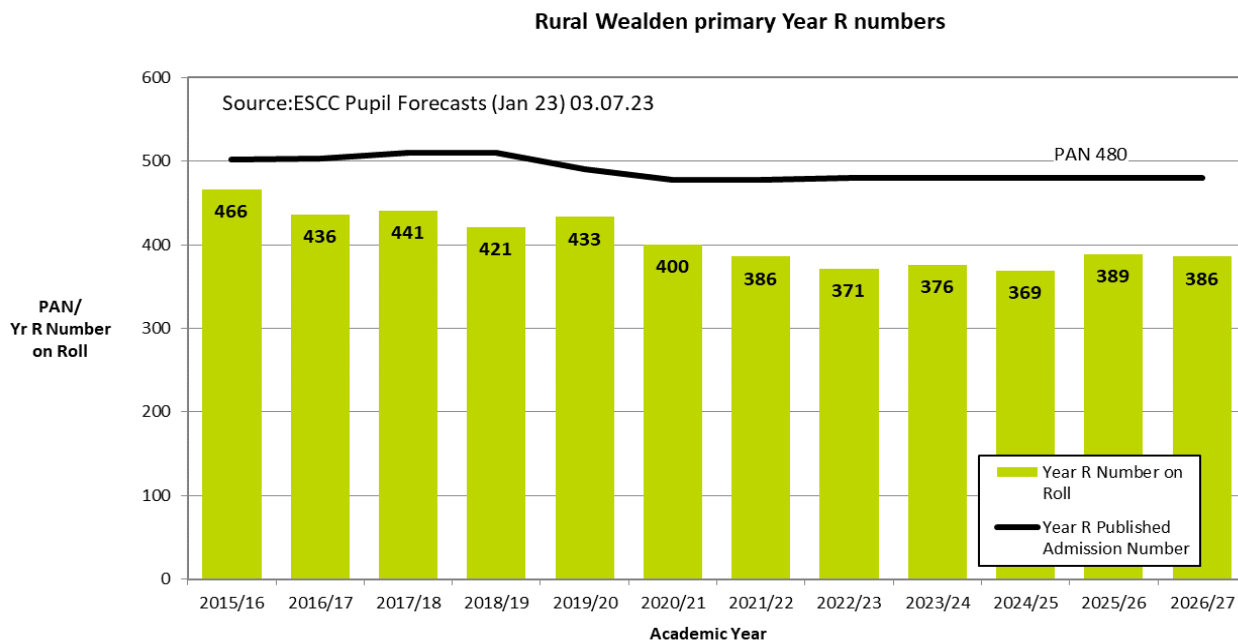
Housing plans

Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, at this time there are no published strategic housing totals for the various areas of the district. As a result, future pupil projections in the area may change, particularly in the period beyond that covered by this School Organisation Plan.

Primary places

The 480 reception (Year R) places in the area are forecast to be sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future. However, the picture will vary between individual rural areas. Intake numbers in rural schools can fluctuate significantly from year to year, owing to the fact that the size of the cohorts of children living in small geographical areas sometimes differs markedly from one age group to the next. Normally schools can organise year-on-year to accommodate these fluctuations.

Lower numbers coming out of some of the larger towns may mean that some rural schools that have habitually filled to their Published Admission Number (PAN) in the past may not do so in some of the coming years.

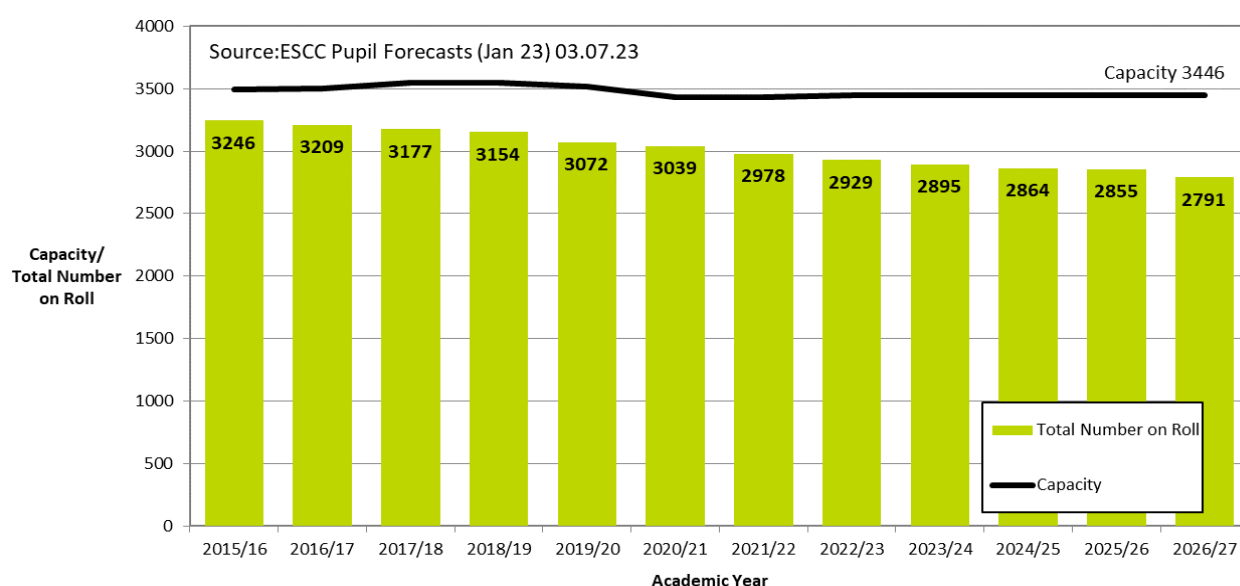


Linked to new housing, in-area numbers requiring a school place in the Maynards Green Community Primary School community area in 2026/27 are forecast to be over 40. If the school is to keep to its PAN of 30, it is likely that the school admissions system will have to direct some in-area applicants to surrounding schools, notably in Heathfield.

Frant CE Primary School has a high in-area cohort of children reaching Year R in 2025/26. It is likely that the high numbers are linked to new housing on the Tunbridge Wells fringes, so the additional demand may be met by schools in Kent. However, it is possible that the school's PAN of 15 could be exceeded.

In 2022/23, surplus places across in the area stood at 14% of capacity. By 2026/27 it is forecast that the figure will have risen to 19%. Four schools have 25% or more surplus places.

Rural Wealden total primary numbers



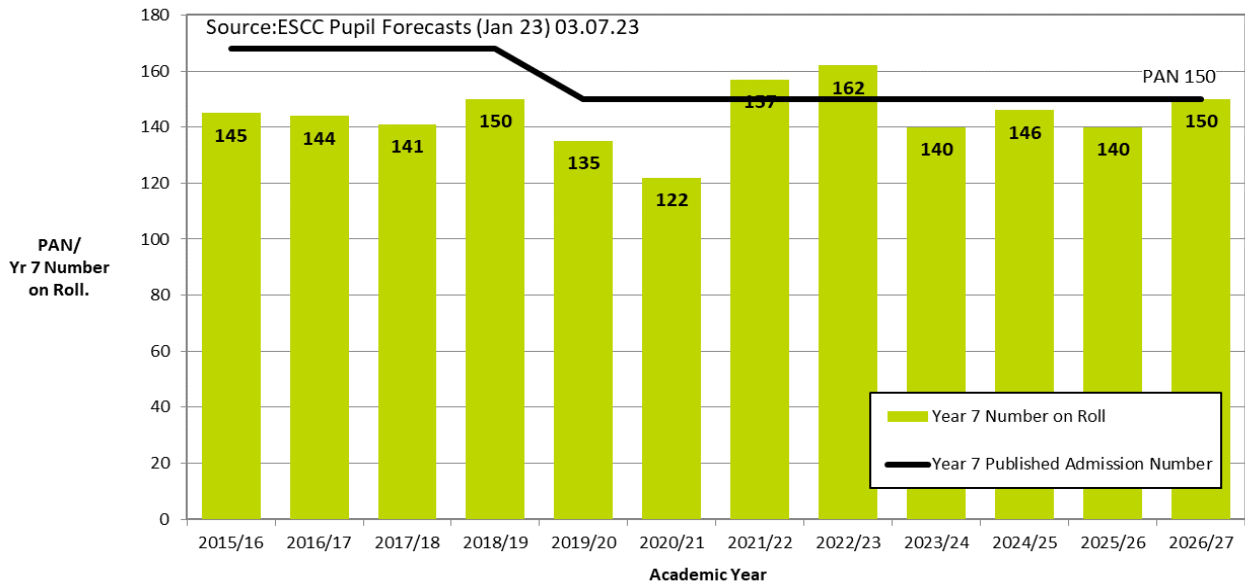
The local authority will continue to monitor the increasing level of surplus places in the area.

Secondary places

Uplands Academy has sufficient places to accommodate in-area numbers, with a large part of demand coming from out of area pupils, especially from neighbouring Kent. The closure of High Weald Academy resulted in a large increase in demand from Kent pupils for the school in 2022/23, which agreed to go over PAN to accommodate.

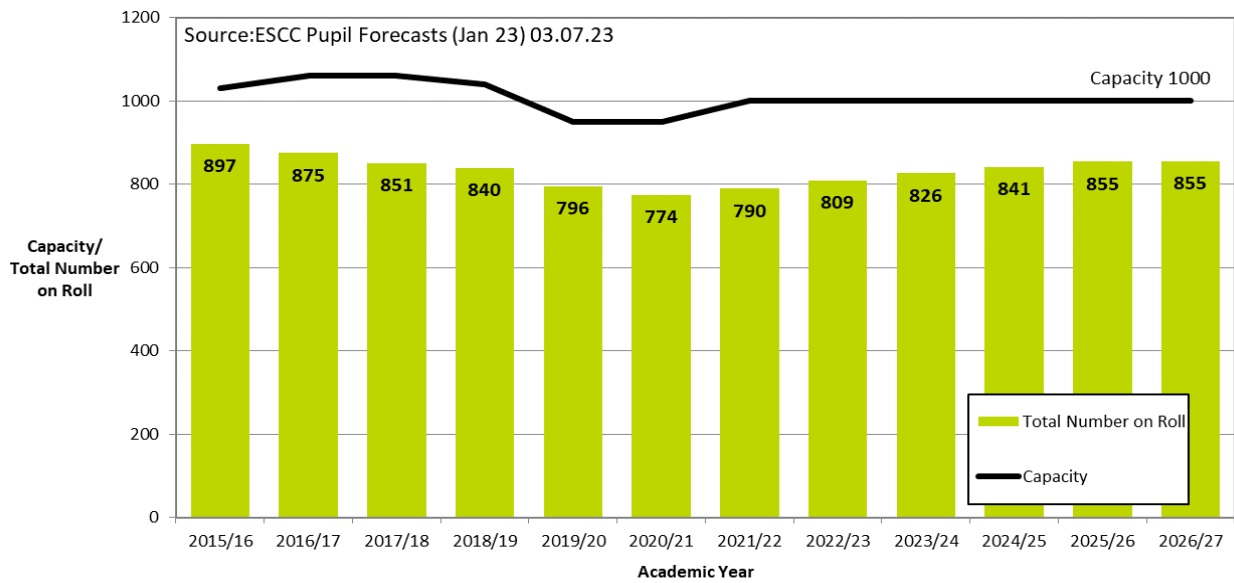
It is assumed that these higher inflows will continue to some extent, resulting in the school being forecast to be full or close to its PAN in forthcoming years. As, for school admissions purposes, most of this out of area demand is non-priority, it is not expected that the school will need to go over PAN.

Uplands Academy secondary Year 7 numbers



In 2022/23, surplus places stood at 19% of capacity. By the end of the plan period this figure is likely to have reduced to 14%.

Uplands Academy total secondary numbers



Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

Special schools and alternative provision

There are 13 state special schools in East Sussex and two alternative provisions. There are also 12 independent special and independent non-maintained special schools in the county.

State special schools and alternative provision	Age range	School type*
Special schools		
Cuckmere House School, Seaford	6-16	Academy
Glyne Gap School, Bexhill	2-19	Academy
Grove Park School, Crowborough	4-19	Community
Hazel Court School, Eastbourne	11-19	Academy
New Horizons, Hastings	7-16	Academy
Saxon Mount School, Hastings	11-16	Academy
St Mary's School, Horam	9-16	Academy
Summerdown School, Eastbourne	3-16	Academy
The Flagship School, Hastings	6-16	Academy
The Lindfield School, Eastbourne	11-16	Academy
The Ropemakers Academy, Hailsham	4-16	Academy
The South Downs School, Eastbourne	4-11	Academy
Torfield School, Hastings	4-11	Academy
Alternative Provision		
College Central, Eastbourne and Hastings	4-16	Academy
The Workplace, Bexhill	11-16	Academy

* Correct on 1 September 2023

Nine mainstream primary schools and ten mainstream secondary schools in East Sussex have specialist facilities.

Mainstream schools with specialist facilities	
Primary schools	All Saints Church of England Primary School, Bexhill
	ARK Little Ridge Primary Academy, Hastings
	Churchwood Primary Academy, Hastings
	Denton Community Primary School, Newhaven
	Grovelands Community Primary School, Hailsham
	Manor Primary School, Uckfield
	Meridian Community Primary School, Peacehaven
	Wallands Primary School, Lewes
	West St Leonards Primary Academy
Secondary schools	Bexhill High Academy
	Hailsham Community College
	Heathfield Community College
	Peacehaven Community School
	Priory School, Lewes
	Robertsbridge Community College
	The Eastbourne Academy
	The Hastings Academy
	The St Leonards Academy
	Uckfield College

You can find more information about each special school and specialist facility on the local authority's [Local Offer page](#).

Education, Health, and Care Plans

The local authority has a statutory duty to identify, assess and provide for children and young people with special educational needs. An assessment may lead to an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) being issued for a child. An EHCP sets out the additional support a child or young person needs and the type of school (mainstream or special) or other provision they will attend in order to meet their needs.

Children and young people with an EHCP will be recorded under one of the following primary need categories:

Primary need categories	
Cognition and Learning Needs	Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD) Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD).
Communication and Interaction Needs	Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
Sensory and/or Physical Needs	Hearing Impairment (HI) Visual Impairment (VI) Physical Disability (PD) Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

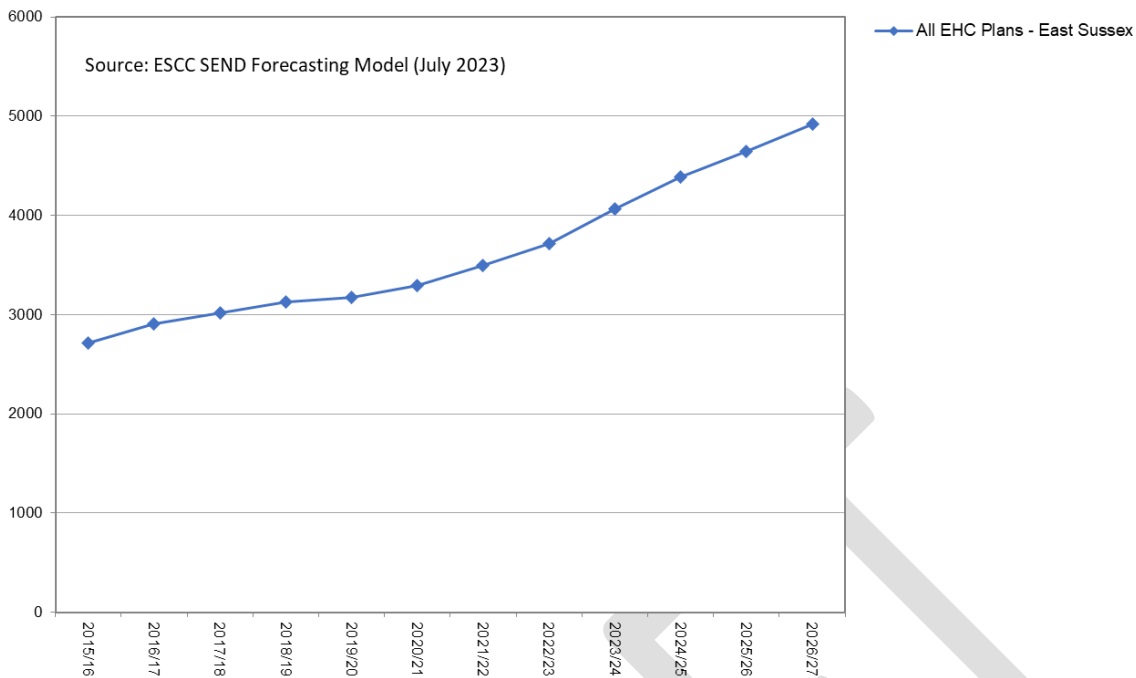
Demand for SEND provision

The overall numbers of children and young people aged 4 to 25 with an EHCP has been rising steeply. There are a variety of reasons for this including parental demand, changes in SEND legislation, changes in policy, changes in diagnostic practice and the impact of the covid pandemic.

In 2022/23, the number of school aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an EHCP stood at 3,713. There were also 530 young people aged 19-25 with an EHCP who need continued support to transition to adulthood. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the local authority saw a 46% increase in the number of new EHCPs being issued when compared to the previous 12 months.

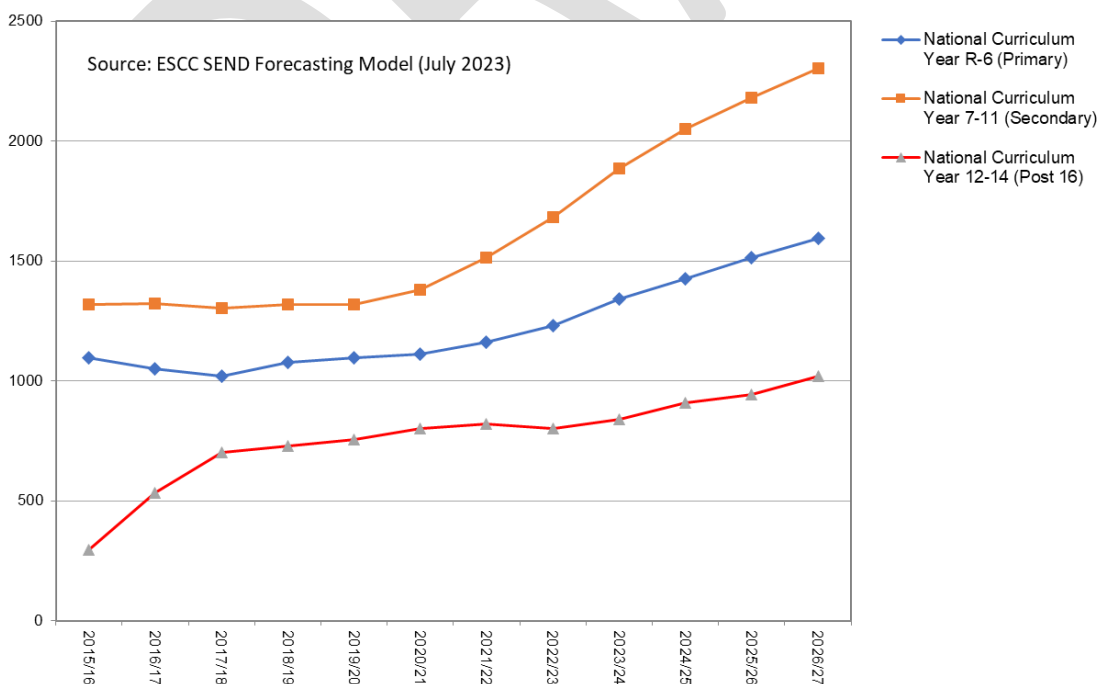
Over the next four years, the local authority forecasts that overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs will grow by around 32%, to stand at approximately 4,900.

Overall numbers of school aged children with EHCPs



The recent rise in numbers have been partly fuelled by changes in SEND legislation which have greatly increased the number of young people aged 16+ with EHCPs following the 2014 education reforms. Challenges with parental confidence in mainstream provision being able to meet the needs of children has also had an impact on the number of requests for EHCP needs assessments.

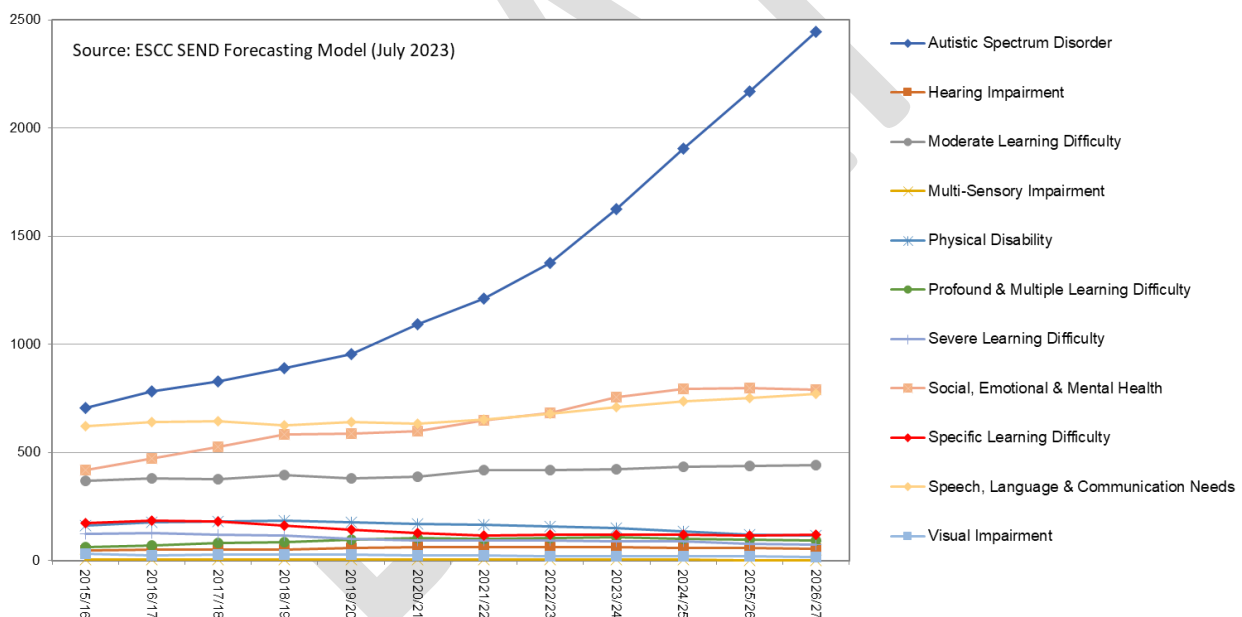
EHCPs by phase of education



The number of children and young people identified with autism is growing year on year and is translating into rapidly increasing numbers of EHCPs issued with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There are no signs of this trend abating, and autism diagnoses look like being the biggest driver of rising EHCP numbers in the coming years.

There has also been a post Covid upturn in the number of plans being issued with a primary need classification of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). It is predicted that this will have at least a short-term upward impact on the numbers of children and young people in these need groups requiring specialist educational provision. There has also been a growth in the number of children presenting with mental health needs that are impacting on school attendance, which has resulted in increases in this area. Numbers in other need groups are relatively stable.

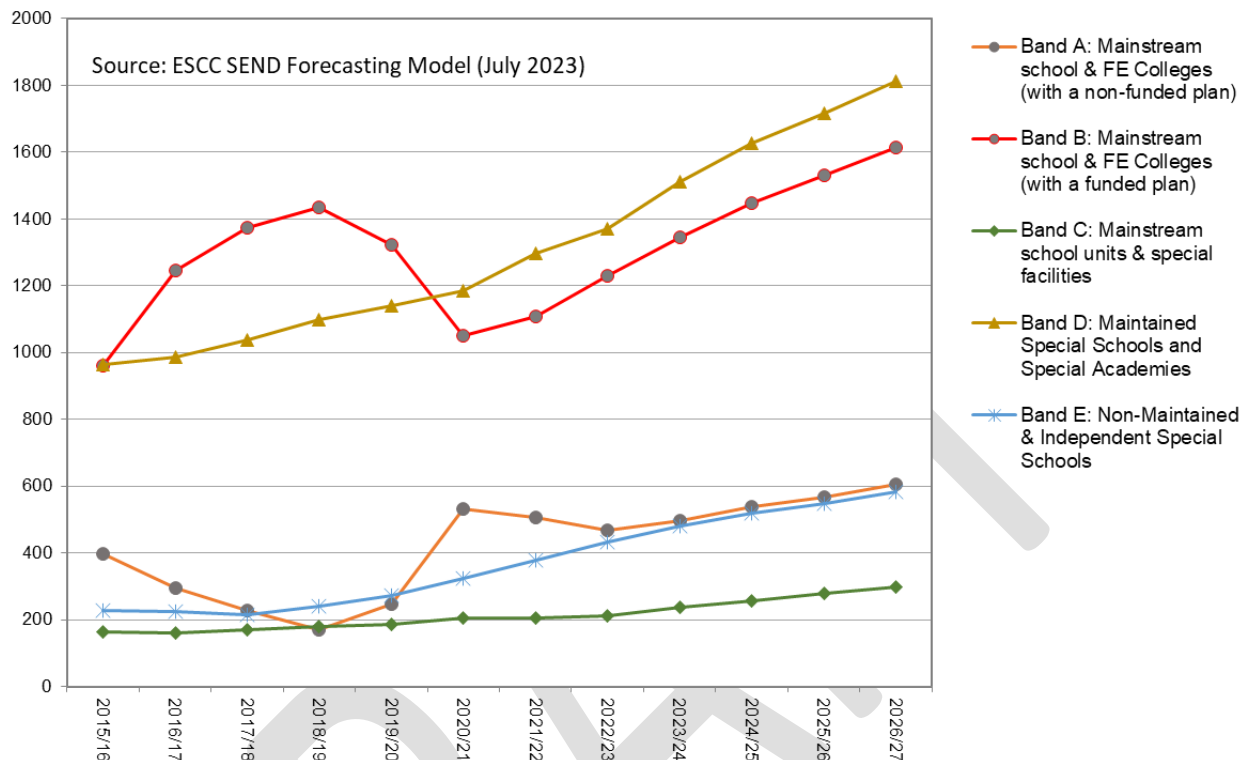
EHCPs by primary need group



In 2022/23, there were 1,790 East Sussex resident children on roll in special schools, of which 1,652 were in schools in East Sussex and 138 were in schools in other authorities. 1,359 children were in maintained and academy provision and 431 were in non-maintained independent special schools. A further 213 East Sussex residents were in specialist facilities in mainstream schools.

The chart below shows that since 2020/21, the biggest need has been for places in maintained special schools and academies followed by funded places in mainstream schools.

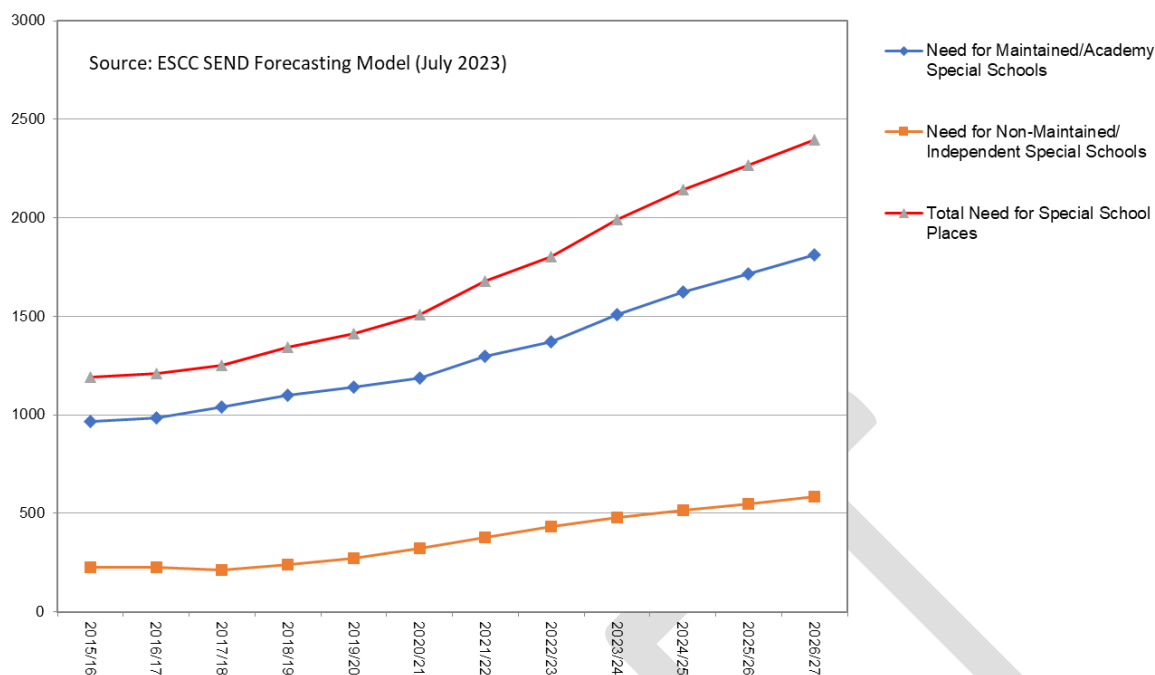
EHCPs by Type of Provision Needed



The numbers assessed as requiring a special school place have risen by 460 (35%) over the past four years. The need for maintained and academy special school places has risen by approximately 270 (25%). The number of pupils requiring non-maintained independent special school places has risen by approximately 190, an 80% increase on the 2018/19 total.

We are forecasting a further increase in demand of around 600 or 33% for special school places over the period to 2026/27.

Need for Special School Places



SEND place planning strategy

In recent years, the local authority has taken action to address the increasing demand for special school and specialist facility places and manage the high cost of placements in non-maintained independent schools. Working closely with the DfE, schools and academy trusts in East Sussex, 381 new special school and alternative provision places have opened in the county, together with new 72 specialist facility places at seven mainstream schools (four primary and two secondary). In addition, two mainstream schools have extended the designation of their existing specialist facilities to reflect the growing need for ASD places.

New special school and alternative provision places:

- **The Workplace, Bexhill**

Alternative Provision for 94 children and young people aged 11-16 with behavioural issues and children at risk of exclusion. Opened in September 2020.

- **The Ropemaker's Academy, Hailsham**

A special school for 80 children and young people aged 4-16 with SEMH needs. Opened in September 2020.

- **The Flagship School, Hastings**

A special school for 72 children and young people aged 7-16 with high functioning ASD and social, behavioural and communication difficulties. Opened in September 2021.

- **Summerdown School, Eastbourne**

A special school for 84 children and young people aged 4-16 with ASD, and 51 children and young people aged 3-16 with PMLD. Opened in September 2022.

New specialist facility places in mainstream schools:

- **Churchwood Primary Academy, Hastings**

Primary specialist facility for eight children with ASD. Opened in September 2019.

- **Grovelands Community Primary School, Hailsham**

Primary specialist facility for eight children with ASD. Opened in April 2019 and expanded to 16 places from September 2023.

- **Priory School, Lewes**

Secondary specialist facility for 12 children with SpLD and associated educational needs. Opened in September 2020.

- **Robertsbridge Community College**

Secondary specialist facility for 12 children with SpLD and associated educational needs. Opened in September 2020.

- **All Saints CE Primary School, Bexhill**

Primary specialist facility for eight children with ASD and associated SEMH and SLCN. Opened in September 2022.

- **Denton Community Primary School, Newhaven**

Primary specialist facility for eight children with ASD. Opened in September 2023.

- **Meridian Community Primary School, Newhaven**

Primary specialist facility for eight children with ASD. Opened in September 2023.

Looking ahead, the local authority recently consulted on a proposal to reorganise and expand Grove Park School, in Crowborough. The proposal is in three parts:

- To lower the school's age range from 4-19 to 2-19 to establish nursery provision for eight full-time equivalent (fte) two and three year olds.
- To enlarge the premises at the Church Road site to accommodate secondary and sixth form pupils currently co-located at Beacon Academy, in Crowborough (ending that arrangement).
- To increase the number of places for secondary and sixth form pupils. This would take the total number of places available at the school for primary, secondary and sixth form to 152.

The local authority is currently assessing the design and deliverability of the project and will make a final decision on the proposal during the 2023/24 academic year.

In addition, we are exploring opportunities for more special school provision in the county to meet the increasing need for places. We have also identified a need for more specialist provision for post-16 learners and will be exploring with current special schools and providers how this can be best delivered.

Where appropriate, the local authority would also like to see more children and young people with EHCPs supported in their local mainstream schools where a child's needs could be met in a specialist facility that includes suitable access to mainstream provision. Specialist facilities provide specific support to a limited number of pupils with an EHCP naming a specific primary special educational need. Pupils within the facility are on the roll of the mainstream school and are in addition to the Published Admission Number (PAN).

With this in mind, we are currently considering opportunities to expand existing specialist facilities and establish new specialist facilities at mainstream primary and secondary schools for 2024/25 and in future years.

Report to: Lead Member for Education, Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Date of meeting: 14 November 2023

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Revision of Home to School Transport Policies

Purpose: To agree the revisions to East Sussex County Council's Home to School Transport policies

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to agree the revisions to East Sussex County Council (ESCC)'s Home to School Transport Policies listed below:

- ESCC Home to School Transport Policy for children of compulsory school age (Appendix 1);
 - ESCC travel assistance policy for children of compulsory school age with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 2);
 - ESCC travel assistance policy for 16-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 3); and
 - ESCC travel assistance policy for post-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 4)
-

1 Background

1.1 In June 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) published updated statutory guidance on '[Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#)', replacing the previous guidance published in 2014.

1.2 A review of ESCC's transport policies has been carried out to ensure that they comply with the new guidance and are as clear and user friendly as possible. Where appropriate additional information has been included to improve clarity.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The revised policies do not contain substantial changes likely to impact on eligibility for transport or travel assistance. As such, the new guidance specifies that there is no need to consult on these changes.

2.2 The new guidance does require that policies be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that parents and carers are able to easily understand whether their child will be eligible for home to school transport or travel assistance.

2.3 The revisions to the policies therefore include re-wording and re-formatting to improve readability.

2.4 There are no changes to eligibility criteria, but there are clearer explanations as to how decisions are reached, and what mode of transport is likely to be offered in what circumstances.

2.5 The revised policies are appended to this report as detailed above.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Lead Member is recommended to agree the revised policies, which comply with updated statutory guidance and provide additional clarification and readability.

3.2 Should the revised policies be agreed, they will be made available on the ESCC website to enable families to ascertain their children's likely eligibility for transport or assistance.

ALISON JEFFERY

Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Appendix 1 - ESCC Home to School Transport Policy for children of compulsory school age

Appendix 2 - ESCC travel assistance policy for children of compulsory school age with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

Appendix 3 - ESCC travel assistance policy for 16-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

Appendix 4 - ESCC travel assistance policy for post-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

Home to school transport policy for children of compulsory school age



Date: 14 November 2023

Document purpose

This policy sets out the legal responsibilities that East Sussex County Council (the Council) has with regards to providing assistance with transport to/from school or another education setting for children living in the Council's administrative area.

It reflects the requirements of the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended). It also has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance issued in June 2023.

Accessibility

Please [contact us](#) if you'd like this document translated into another language or need other assistance reading this document.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly. For most parents, this includes arranging travel to and from school, meeting the costs involved and accompanying their child(ren) as necessary.
- 1.2 In some cases, the Council has a duty to provide suitable free school transport. Transport is provided in the most cost effective and appropriate way for the child's needs. This policy specifies the categories of eligible children, ways in which free travel may be provided, circumstances when assistance is not provided, how to appeal a decision and the complaints procedure.
- 1.3 Separate documents set out the provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of compulsory school age (up to Year 11 pupils), young people of sixth form age and adult learners. Find out more on our [School transport policies](#) download page.

2. Qualifying for home to school transport

- 2.1 Eligible children are defined as children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest suitable or designated school and:
 - the school is beyond the statutory school distance; **or**
 - they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem; **or**
 - they would not be able to walk to their school in reasonable safety.
- 2.2 Children can also qualify for assistance under 'extended rights' eligibility (see paragraphs 2.21 - 2.23 below).

Nearest suitable or designated school and statutory school distance

- 2.3 Free transport is provided if their nearest suitable or designated school, measured from the child's home to the nearest available entrance to the school, is:
 - Beyond 2 miles (if below the age of eight); **or**
 - Beyond 3 miles (if aged between eight and 16).
- 2.4 The nearest suitable school is the school closest to the child's home that is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. A designated school serves the area in which the child lives and is suitable for the child. If there is more than one school serving the area, the nearest to the home will be used for transport eligibility purposes.
- 2.5 Distances are measured by the shortest available walking route using our Geographical Information System (GIS), taking account of public footpaths, bridleways and public rights of way up to the statutory distances of 2 and 3 miles. Beyond these, the measurements used are road routes only. This calculation method is designed to establish which school is the closest school for transport purposes. It does not take account of the nature of the route as there is no expectation that the route will be walked. Route safety is dealt with under paragraphs 2.17-2.19 in cases where children live within the statutory distance of their nearest suitable school.
- 2.6 Parents should note that home to school distances may change over time due to improvements in GIS accuracy or where new developments and infrastructure reveal

new routes. As a result, the Council regularly updates its mapping data to ensure distance measurements are made using the most accurate data available. This may mean in some cases parents will find the eligibility changes between an older and younger sibling.

- 2.7 We will not usually provide free transport between home and school for children who attend schools other than the nearest suitable or designated school unless families have used all their preferences to apply for schools which are closer to the family home than the school the child attends.
- 2.8 You can apply for travel assistance due to home to school distance *<insert link when online form is ready>* If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Admissions Team on 0300 330 9472.

Special educational needs, disability or mobility problem without an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

- 2.9 A child is eligible for free travel to school if:
- they attend their nearest suitable school, and
 - it is within the statutory distance of their home, and
 - they could not reasonably be expected to walk there because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem.
- 2.10 Eligibility is assessed on a case-by-case basis to establish if a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk. The assessment takes account of the child's physical ability to walk to school and any health and safety issues related to their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems.
- 2.11 To assist in determining a child's physical ability, we will need to see medical evidence from a consultant or GP confirming the medical condition and any relevant facts regarding or impacting upon mobility.
- 2.12 A fee may be charged for supplying the medical evidence and parents need to cover any costs. We will also need to know how long transport assistance is required and an indication of what type of travel is appropriate.
- 2.13 Assistance can include temporary mobility problems although it is not always possible to make travel arrangements before the child has recovered.
- 2.14 All cases where transport is agreed will be reviewed regularly unless it is a time-limited offer of support.
- 2.15 You can apply for travel assistance due to SEN, disability or mobility problem *<insert link when online form is ready>* If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Admissions Team on 0300 330 9472.
- 2.16 For children with an EHC plan, the application process is different. You can apply at [How to apply | East Sussex County Council](#) You will also find links to the full policy for Travel assistance for children of compulsory school age with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan).

Walking in reasonable safety

- 2.17 This relates to children who live within the statutory distance and attend their nearest suitable or designated school. Assessments do not determine whether a route is "safe" or "dangerous". All roads may be thought of as presenting some element of road safety risk, whether they are heavily trafficked urban routes, or

more lightly trafficked rural routes. Instead, the assessment determines whether transport should be provided because a child's **only** walking route presents specific road safety hazards.

- 2.18 Where parents have reservations about the suitability of a route, the Road Safety Team will look at the relationship between pedestrians and traffic and will make a formal assessment based on national guidance. Issues surrounding personal security do not form part of the assessment and the Council is able to assume that a child is accompanied by a responsible person. There is no requirement for a route to be lit and temporary closures such as road works or flooding are not considered in the formal assessment. Assistance will not be provided if alternative routes are available within the statutory distance.
- 2.19 Parents are responsible for ensuring their child has suitable clothes and equipment for the journey (for example, boots, wet weather clothes, reflective bands, torch, etc) and national guidance is quite clear that conditions such as muddy footpaths or lack of street lighting do not mean that a route is not available. Available routes include crossing fields, wooded areas, bridleways, public footpaths and public rights of way.
- 2.20 You can apply for travel assistance due to route safety *<insert link when online form is ready>* If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Admissions Team on 0300 330 9472.

Extended rights eligibility (low-income grounds)

- 2.21 Free transport is arranged for pupils entitled to [free school meals](#) or whose parents receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credit* in the following circumstances:
- The nearest suitable school is beyond two miles, by the shortest walking route (for children over the age of eight and under 11); or
 - The school is between two miles (shortest walking route) and six miles (by road) (if aged 11 to 16 and there are not three or more nearer suitable schools); or
 - The school is between two miles (shortest walking route) and 15 miles (by road) and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11 to 16). Confirmation of baptismal status or support from the parish priest or minister of religion is required.
- 2.22 Transport is considered on a case-by-case basis and not on a family basis and it is not uncommon for one child in a family to qualify for free transport while another does not qualify. Factors include whether a school is available (this can change year on year) and whether the school is on a split site where the distance is different.
- 2.23 *You can tell if you are in receipt of the maximum WTC from your tax credit award notice issued by HM Revenue and Customs. Part 2 entitled 'How we work out your tax credits' includes details of WTC elements other than childcare. It then lists 'any reduction due to your income'. You are in receipt of the maximum where the reduction shows as £0. Alternatively, you will be on the maximum if your assessed income is below the £7455 threshold (2023/24).
- 2.24 You can [apply for travel assistance due to family income](#). If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Admissions Team on 0300 330 9472.

Timing of assessment for transport eligibility

- 2.25 For the large majority of cases, eligibility for free school travel is assessed following the normal school admissions round when places are offered for children starting primary school or transferring to secondary school. As the Council co-ordinates school place offers, we are able to identify which school is the nearest suitable and whether a place is available.
- 2.26 In some cases, eligibility is assessed at other times, for example due to a family moving into the area during the school year.

Other circumstances where transport may be offered

- 2.27 The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent where necessary, unless there is a good reason why it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so, for example, if a parent's disability prevents them from accompanying their child to school.
- 2.28 Reasons such as the parent's working pattern, caring responsibilities or the fact they have children attending more than one school will not normally be considered good reasons for a parent being unable to accompany their child. These apply to many parents and, in most circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the parent to make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities (for example, their responsibilities as an employee and as a parent.)
- 2.29 If you are prevented from accompanying your children on the home to school journey because of a disability*, we may be able to provide travel assistance for children under 11 if all other solutions have been investigated. For example, if arrangements with another parent or discussions with the school about travel options have been unable to provide a solution.
- * a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- 2.30 To receive help, your child must be attending their nearest suitable or designated school. We will then look at the distance to school. Where the distance is very short, assistance may not be agreed, especially for a child in Year 5 or 6.
- 2.31 You can apply for travel assistance due to SEN, disability or mobility problem *<insert link when online form is ready>* If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Admissions Team on 0300 330 9472.
- 2.32 Please attach medical evidence from a consultant or doctor which must not be older than three months from the date of application. Please note that a fee may be charged for supplying the medical evidence and you would need to pay any costs. Transport cannot be arranged until the medical evidence is provided.

3. Discretionary travel

Children in Reception classes who are below compulsory school age

- 3.1 Children who have not reached compulsory school age are not entitled to free transport. However, assistance is given at no charge where the child would be entitled to free transport on attaining compulsory school age.

Vacant seats scheme

- 3.2 Requests are sometimes received from parents who would like their children to use a school coach when they do not qualify for travel assistance. If spare places are available, a travel permit can be purchased. This is only available on timetabled coaches.
- 3.3 Payment must be made in advance and the cost from September 2023 is £188.70 per term for a secondary school student and £94.35 per term for primary school children (based on the six-term year).
- 3.4 A second or subsequent child from the same family will be charged at £141.53 (secondary) and £70.76 (primary). These costs are reviewed yearly.
- 3.5 Where there is more demand for places than seats available, the following priorities will be applied to decide who can travel:
- 1) If students are attending their designated school but are not eligible for free school transport, then those living furthest from the school are given priority.
 - 2) If students are not attending their designated school, then those living nearest to the school are given priority.
- 3.6 Places on hired vehicles cannot be guaranteed. We will have to withdraw the vacant seat offer if we need the seat for someone else who qualifies for free transport or if we no longer have anyone on the route that qualifies for free transport. ESCC will give as much notice as possible however the minimum notice given will be one week. Full details of the Vacant Seats Scheme are available online at: [Information about buying a vacant seat on school transport](#)

4 Occasions when transport is not supplied or withdrawn

- 4.1 Our duty is to provide transport to get children to and from school at the beginning and end of the school's published day.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of parents or carers or schools to arrange and pay for transport at other times. Specific examples of where transport will not be provided by the Council include:
- Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
 - School-to-school placements. This is the responsibility of the school where the child is on roll.
 - Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the school/ education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
 - Dissatisfaction with the nearest suitable/designated school. If a child has experienced difficulties at the nearest suitable/designated school and has moved schools for this reason, this does not create an entitlement to free transport.
 - To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
 - To accommodate attendance at breakfast clubs, after-school activities or homework clubs.
 - Before or after medical appointments

- To accommodate work experience or off-site educational placements
 - For pre-course visits, ‘taster’ days or parents’ evenings/visits
 - In the event of sickness where a child has to be collected from school
 - In the event of a fixed term exclusion where a child has to be collected from school
 - Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal school day
 - School trips or educational visits
 - Part-time attendance unless the Council considers it necessary for a child with a medical condition which means they are not well enough to attend school for the whole day.
- 4.3 It is the Council’s policy to withdraw any transport that has been issued in error. If we find it necessary to withdraw your child’s transport, we will write to you giving you the reason. We will also give a minimum of 2 weeks’ notice to enable you time to make your own alternative arrangements.

Other factors for parents to be aware of

Definition of home address

- 4.4 Occasionally a child will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In this situation, the address used for determining transport will be the one at which the child spends most of their time including weekends and school holidays as well as during the week. The Council may include factors such as where the child is registered with a doctor, which parent receives child benefit or which address was used when the school place was offered to decide which address to use. In cases where parents state the child splits their time equally between addresses, the Council will use the address which is closer to the school attended for transport eligibility purposes.

Denominational primary schools

- 4.5 There is no policy to support children attending a denominational church aided primary school for reasons of religion or faith.

Independent or private schools (including nurseries)

- 4.6 Assistance is not given to children attending schools in the private sector unless the placement has been named in Section I of the child’s EHCP and the transport criteria have been met.

Timeframe for processing applications

- 4.7 Applications are processed in two stages. Stage one is determining eligibility. Officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 10 working days of receiving an application.
- 4.8 Stage two involves determining which mode of travel is appropriate. This can typically take up to 10 working days once transport has been authorised by a designated officer.
- 4.9 Whilst every effort will be made to complete the transport arrangements as quickly as possible, you will need to make your own travel arrangements until the travel permit or hired service is available.

5 Operational standards and practices

Types of travel assistance for eligible children

- 5.1 It is for the Council's Transport Hub to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get pupils between home and school, taking account of any special arrangements to support the child's particular needs. Once this task has been completed, the Transport Hub will contact parents by email or letter to advise them of the arrangements. Parents are not able to choose which form of transport or specific vehicle their child will travel on.

Public services and school coaches

- 5.2 In most cases, we provide a ticket for use on public transport or provide a seat on a hired coach. Transport arrangements will operate to and from a reasonable proximity to the home address and the school (typically no more than one mile at either end), will run at times compatible with the school and not demand excessive waiting time, should not require a child to make several changes on public transport and not result in an unreasonably long journey time. The responsibility for ensuring a child's safety in getting to and from the pick-up point rests with the parent/carer.
- 5.3 As a general guide, the maximum journey time for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way, and 75 minutes each way for a child of secondary school age, including any time taken to walk to a pick-up point, but there will be circumstances in which this is not possible, for example in rural areas where children live in remote locations, where a child needs to travel a long way to the school named in their EHC plan, or when journey times are extended by traffic delays.
- 5.4 Parents should make contingency plans in the event of transport not turning up or where there are unavoidable delays.
- 5.5 Lost and replacement passes can be ordered online at [Home to school transport - replacement travel pass form | East Sussex County Council](#). A fee is payable.

Expected behaviour on school transport

- 5.6 Seat belts must be worn where fitted. In addition, children and young people must not smoke or vape on school transport, drop litter inside the vehicle, eat or drink in the vehicle or stand up or move around in the vehicle whilst it is moving.
- 5.7 All personal equipment, e.g. musical instruments, laptop, tablets, mobile phones etc, should be secured in a suitable bag. If a child or young person causes damage to a vehicle, the operator may require parents to reimburse them for any repairs. If a child misbehaves persistently on a school vehicle, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action to protect other users of the service. This may involve, among other steps, asking the school to take disciplinary action against the child including issuing a ban on transport.
- 5.8 Vehicle breakdowns - If the vehicle breaks down, the driver will call for assistance. Children must follow the instructions of the driver. It is normal for children to wait in the vehicle, with the driver and/or escort, until a replacement vehicle arrives.

Mileage payments

- 5.9 If there is no suitable public transport or hired vehicle, parents willing to make their own travel arrangements will receive help with the cost of two return journeys a day. This is based on the distance between home and school. Payment is made on a family basis at the rate of 25p per mile since the cost will be the same for two or more children, with changes to this cost if children are at different schools.

- 5.10 This is not available to parents who prefer to make their own arrangements to transport their child where suitable public transport or a hired vehicle is available.

Travel by taxi or minibus

- 5.11 In cases where the home address is not served by public transport, hired transport will be provided to get pupils between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day. Once authorised, new transport solutions can take up to 15 working days to organise. This is because the council must secure transport via a fair and open tendering process. In addition, some children will have a needs assessment completed to ensure the arrangements meet their needs.
- 5.12 The Council cannot guarantee the travel arrangements e.g. passenger assistant/driver will stay the same throughout the child's academic career. You will need to be prepared for this possibility although we will give as much notice as possible when making changes. You should also be prepared for unforeseen circumstances such as illness or vehicle breakdown. It is also possible for an operator to give up a particular run.
- 5.13 In the morning, you will need to have your child ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving. It is also the responsibility of the parent or carer to get the child into the vehicle and the school's duty to get the child from the vehicle into the school building.
- 5.14 In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive your child at the arranged time unless it has been agreed between the Council and parent/carers in advance that this is not necessary. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other children and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the child may result in the child being taken to a safe place. Costs associated with looking after or transporting your child due to a parent or carer not being ready to receive the child will be passed on to the family. It is also the parent or carer's responsibility to collect their child from the safe place or arrange and pay for their travel home.

Service standards for hired transport

Licensing and training of drivers and escorts

- 5.15 Drivers of coaches will possess PCV licenses. Taxi drivers will have been approved by the local Borough or District Council licensing officers. The County Council offers training to drivers and escorts to support them in their role, including extra guidance about individual pupil's needs.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- 5.16 All drivers and passenger assistants of taxis, minibuses and hired coaches on Council commissioned transport are subject to a DBS check. This does not currently apply to those driving public transport.

Suitable vehicles and equipment

- 5.17 Vehicles used to transport children will be appropriate to the needs of the child. Where children need to be transported in their wheelchairs, a specialist vehicle will be provided. Other essential items of equipment will also be transported.

Contract information

- 5.18 All parents or carers will be provided with detailed information about the travel arrangements if assistance is provided. Such as: driver name and phone number, pick up and drop off times, and handover arrangements.

Monitoring operator performance

- 5.19 If parents have any concerns about the service being provided, they should contact staff in the Transport Hub in the Communities, Economy and Transport Department so that the concerns can be raised with the provider of the transport service. Please phone 01273 335067. Service performance is subject to a contract between the operator and the Council.
- 5.20 We welcome the support of parents in ensuring the smooth running of their child's transport arrangements by letting us know:
- if there are any changes to your child's needs which could affect transport, e.g. a recent medical diagnosis
 - about a different type of wheelchair or car seat;
 - about a change to your child's behaviour

6 Review of transport provision

- 6.1 We will make regular checks to ensure the eligibility criteria continue to be met although you should inform us immediately if you move address or your child changes school. Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in you having to pay back unused portions of rail or bus season tickets.
- 6.2 The mode of travel being used to provide assistance will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the child's needs.
- 6.3 Complaints and concerns about transport arrangements should be directed to:
Email: compliance.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk

7 Support in further education

- 7.1 All young people in England must continue in education or training, requiring them to continue until at least their 18th birthday. This does not mean young people have to stay in school to continue in education or training. Options include full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider. They can also go into full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time education, training or an apprenticeship. As a result, there is no obligation to provide free school transport that some younger children are entitled to but there is a duty to provide travel assistance to learners of sixth form age and adult learners if it is considered necessary.
- 7.2 For more details about what support might be available please visit [School transport policies](#) The Post 16 Transport Policy Statement includes information on fares and concessions and a summary of policy for learners with SEND with an EHC plan. You can also view the full policies for Post 16 and adult learners.

8 Policy changes

- 8.1 The Council reserves the right to make minor amendments or corrections to this policy without consulting on them.
- 8.2 Where proposals to change the policy may affect children's eligibility for transport, we will consult for a minimum of 28 days during term time. Consultees will include schools, parents of children who will (or may) be affected by the proposed changes, including those whose children attend school in a neighbouring authority, and those whose children may be affected in the future.
- 8.3 Wherever possible, changes will be phased in so that children who begin attending a school under one set of travel arrangements continue to benefit from those arrangements until they leave that school.

9 Appeal process

- 9.1 Applicants have the right to appeal if they disagree with a transport decision. In line with government guidance, the Council operates a two-stage appeal process. The following process must be followed:

Stage 1 transport appeal:

- 9.2 A stage 1 appeal form needs to be completed to make an appeal.
- 9.3 All stage 1 appeals will be considered by a senior officer within Children's Services who will:
 - consider the appeal form and any information provided in support of the appeal;
 - review the initial request for transport assistance including any supporting information provided with the application;
 - any other correspondence used in reaching the initial decision.
- 9.4 The Senior Officer may consult other departments and/or agencies as necessary.
- 9.5 In addition to completing a stage 1 appeal form it is possible to telephone one of our officers who will record your comments in writing and will pass this onto the senior officer for their consideration.
- 9.6 We shall aim to provide you with a decision from your stage 1 appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the application. You will receive a letter by email with the detailed reasoning for the decision. We will also inform you how to escalate your appeal to the next stage if you disagree with the outcome.

Stage 2 transport appeal:

- 9.7 A stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed to make a Stage 2 appeal.
- 9.8 All stage 2 appeals will be considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel ("the Appeal Panel"). This is made up of three elected County Councillors who are independent of officers and the Stage 1 appeal process. The Appeal Panel will consider the original application and the appeal forms together with any supporting documents or information provided to the Council in relation to the application or the appeal. The Appeal Panel will also consider all verbal information made by the parent/carer (such as via phone calls) where it is provided before the deadline for the meeting. The Appeal Panel may have questions during a hearing and in that situation, they may ask the supporting officer to seek clarification by making a telephone call to the parent/carer.

- 9.9 The stage 2 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the family and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. If the appeal refers to financial hardship, the financial statement on the Stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed.
- 9.10 It is not usually possible for parents/carers to attend Appeal Panel meetings in person. It may be possible to provide verbal representations at the meeting in exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer would face significant disadvantage in making their appeal without this. Examples of significant disadvantage could include having a relevant disability such as severe dyslexia or a learning difficulty that makes written communication difficult and where it has not been possible to access support to set out in writing the reason for appeal. It is possible to request to make verbal representations on the Stage 2 appeal form and the request will be considered by the supporting officer. It is expected that the verbal representation will be made via a telephone call or video call for a fixed duration at the start of the Appeal Panel hearing.
- 9.11 If the Appeal Panel is not satisfied it has enough information to reach a decision it may send a letter containing its provisional view on a stage 2 appeal and/or requesting further information. This is called a 'minded to' letter. Where necessary, this letter will be sent within 5 working days of the Appeal Panel meeting. A minded to letter is an opportunity for the appellant to comment on the Appeal Panel's provisional view of the stage 2 appeal, to answer any questions or points of clarification raised in the letter and to provide any further information requested. The letter will set out how long you have to respond to it, but this is usually 7 days. The Appeal Panel will then meet to finally determine your stage 2 appeal taking into account any response to its minded to letter.
- 9.12 A stage 2 appeal panel will be convened within 40 working days of receipt of the application. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be provided with the detailed reasoning for the decision and details of how to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if you believe your appeal has been handled unfairly or if you feel the decision of the panel is flawed on public law grounds.
- 9.13 **Stage 1 and 2 appeal forms** can be found on the [school transport appeals](#) webpage.

10 Complaints

- 10.1 The Council is here to help and support the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.
- 10.2 Sometimes things go wrong, and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the Council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or impolitely. We cannot investigate matters that are subject to the two-stage appeals process.
- 10.3 Complaints can be made online to the Children's Services Customer Relations Team. [Feedback and complaints about Children's Services | East Sussex County Council](#)
- 10.4 You can also submit your complaint by email to CS.Customerrelations@eastsussex.gov.uk or by post to: Customer Relations, East G, County Hall, Lewes, BN7 1UE
- 10.5 Parents can contact their local County Councillor - visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ to find your councillor.

Travel assistance policy for compulsory school aged children with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)



Date: 14 November 2023

Document purpose

This policy sets out how East Sussex County Council (“the Council”) will decide eligibility for travel assistance for children of compulsory school age who have been issued with an Education, Health and Care plan.

In formulating this policy ESCC has had regard to the statutory guidance in relation to the duty set out in section 35B Education Act 1996.

Please [contact us](#) if you would like this document translated into another language or need other assistance reading this document.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy explains the Council's statutory responsibility in respect of travel assistance for children of statutory school age (up to and including Year 11 pupils) with an Educational, Health and Care plan ("EHC plan"). It states how to apply for the travel assistance and how eligibility is determined and assessed.
- 1.2. A child is of compulsory school age from the start of term following their 5th birthday until the end of the school year in which they turn 16.
- 1.3. Separate policies set out the provision for children of compulsory school age without an EHC plan, young people of sixth form age and adult learners. Find out more online at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>

2. Local authority responsibility

- 2.1. School transport law is set out in the Education Act 1996 (as amended) ("the Act"). Schedule 35B of the Act sets out that SEND children are eligible for free transport when they cannot reasonably walk to school by reason of their special educational needs, disability, or mobility problem (including temporary medical conditions). SEND children may also be eligible for school transport as per the Home to School Transport Policy for children of compulsory school age, regardless of their SEND. This policy can be found at: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>
- 2.2. Eligible children only qualify for free transport to the nearest suitable school that can meet the child's SEND. For children with an EHC plan, this is stated as the school named in section I of their plan. If, by parental choice, a more distant school is attended, any transport shall remain the responsibility of the parent/carer. Whilst the child's EHC plan may name the parents' or carers' choice of school, this does not mean that the Council must provide travel assistance if, in the Council's view, the child's needs could be suitably met at a nearer school. This will be made clear in Section I of the EHC plan. Further information about who could be eligible for transport assistance can be found in section 3.
- 2.3. Statutory guidance states that local authorities are required to make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their SEND. These applications should be assessed on an individual basis to identify the child's particular transport requirements. For eligible children, the local authority must then make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary. Information on transport arrangements can be found in section 6.

3. Criteria for travel assistance

- 3.1. Travel assistance is provided by the Council to children living in East Sussex who meet the criteria as set out in the Home to School Transport Policy for children of compulsory school age found on the following page: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>
- 3.2. Assistance will only be provided when the child is attending their nearest suitable school as agreed by the Council.
- 3.3. Where a child with an EHC plan does not qualify for travel assistance due to age and distance or extended rights eligibility (as defined in the Home to School Transport Policy), parents/carers can apply for SEND travel assistance. The application will be considered based on the needs of the child looking at whether they could reasonably

be expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem. The assessment assumes the child is accompanied by a responsible adult.

- 3.4. The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent where necessary, unless there is a good reason why it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so, for example, if a parent's disability prevents them from accompanying their child to school.
- 3.5. Reasons such as the parent's working pattern, caring responsibilities or the fact they have children attending more than one school will not normally be considered good reasons for a parent being unable to accompany their child. These apply to many parents, and, in most circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the parent to make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities (for example, their responsibilities as an employee and as a parent).
- 3.6. If a parent is prevented from accompanying their child on the home to school journey because of a disability or medical condition, we will consider an application for travel assistance if all other solutions have been investigated. For example, if arrangements with another parent or discussions with the school about travel options have been unable to provide a solution. Where there remains one adult in the household that does not have a disability or medical condition, they will usually be considered available to accompany children to school irrespective of work or other commitments. You will need to provide medical evidence from a doctor which must not be older than three months from the date of application. Please note that a fee may be charged for supplying the medical evidence and you would need to pay any costs. Transport cannot be arranged until the medical evidence is provided. If transport is agreed, your case will be reviewed regularly.
- 3.7. Children in the care of a local authority or a fostering agency are treated no differently from other children regarding eligibility for assistance with transport.
- 3.8. Travel assistance to respite care is discretionary and can be requested. The Council will separately consider requests for transport to respite during term time provided the placement has been arranged by the Social Care team. An additional charge may be made for transport to respite if approved.

4. Application process

- 4.1. The quickest and most secure way to make an application is online using the application form found in the following section of the Council website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel On submission of an online application form, you will get an automated email acknowledgement. Alternatively, we can send you a paper copy of the application form on request.
- 4.2. A new application is required for everyone requesting SEND travel assistance as well as when circumstances change such as moving to a new school or moving home address.
- 4.3. More information may be sought to help with the decision. Information on how the decision is made can be found in the next section. It can take some time to reach a decision depending on the timing of the application and whether further information needs to be requested. On average it could take 10 days for a decision to be communicated to an applicant.
- 4.4. Reimbursements for travel costs incurred before an application is approved, and travel assistance arranged will not be made.
- 4.5. If you disagree with the decision, you can lodge an appeal. Further information on how to appeal can be found in section 9.

5. How decisions are made

- 5.1. All applications will be considered by an officer. They will consider whether the child is eligible for transport because they live beyond the statutory distances listed in the Home to School transport policy. If they do not qualify on distance, the officer will consider the child's needs and their ability to walk to school, and whether it is reasonable and possible for them to do so either accompanied or unaccompanied by an adult. Applications will be assessed based on the evidence provided, but the officer may request additional information.
- 5.2. The officer will use the information provided in the application, any other email correspondence with the Council in relation to the provision of transport as well as verbal information provided during phone calls.
- 5.3. Occasionally a child will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In this situation, the address used for determining transport will be the one at which the child spends most of their time including weekends and school holidays as well as during the week. The Council may consider factors such as where the child is registered with a doctor, which parent receives child benefit or which address was used when the school place was offered to decide which address to use. In cases where parents state the child splits their time equally between addresses, the Council will use the address which is closer to the school attended for transport eligibility purposes.

6. What happens if travel assistance is approved

- 6.1. Applications are processed in three stages.
 - Stage one - determining eligibility. Officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 10 working days of receiving an application. This may take longer depending on the complexity of the child's circumstances.
 - Stage two - assessing needs on transport. A full needs assessment will be completed detailing the child's needs on transport and any medical issues they may have to ensure they are safely transported. The time this takes will vary depending on the needs of the child. The applicant will be kept up to date with the progress of this stage.
 - Stage three - setting up transport. An officer will determine which mode of travel is appropriate based on the needs assessment and will set this up. This can take up to 15 working days depending on the complexity of the needs of the child.
- 6.2. Whilst every effort will be made to complete the transport arrangements as quickly as possible, you will need to make your own travel arrangements until this is set up. We will not reimburse for any costs incurred during this time.
- 6.3. It is for the Council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get pupils between home and school, taking account of any special arrangements to support the child's particular needs. Once this task has been completed, the Transport Hub will contact parents by email or telephone to advise them of the arrangements. Parents are not able to choose which form of transport or specific vehicle their child will travel on. If you disagree with the type of assistance being offered, you should contact the Transport Hub (email specialist-transport.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk or phone

01273 335 067) to discuss your concerns. If they are unable to resolve your query, you can then raise a complaint (see section 15 below)

- 6.4. As a general guide, the maximum journey time for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way, and 75 minutes each way for a child of secondary school age, including any time taken to walk to a pick-up point. However, there will be circumstances in which this is not possible, for example in rural areas where children live in remote locations, where a child needs to travel a long way to the school named in their EHC plan, or when journey times are extended by traffic delays.
- 6.5. Transport will be one of the following:
 - Independent travel training
 - Personal travel budget
 - Public transport or school coach service
 - Minibus or taxi.
- 6.6. Independent travel training (ITT): ITT is the process by which a person learns to make a journey between two places on their own and in safety - in this case the journey between home and school. The training supports the child to gain additional independence by providing extra help or support to enable the child to make journeys alone using public transport (and walking or cycling as necessary) when the child has reached an appropriate age or stage of development. Children will be considered for an assessment for their suitability for ITT and we expect parents/carers to positively engage with this process. At the end of the ITT, the child will be assessed on their ability to travel independently. When the student has been assessed to have completed the ITT, the travel assistance will be re-assessed and may be ceased or amended accordingly.
- 6.7. Personal travel budget ("PTB"): A parent or carer may be offered a PTB that provides financial assistance to organise transport to school themselves. The amount of the PTB is based on the distance of a return journey from home to the nearest suitable school and is paid in monthly instalments. A PTB is offered at the Council's discretion where it is cost effective to the Council whilst ensuring families have the opportunity for increased choice and control. The offer of a PTB will be reviewed if there are concerns regarding a child's attendance at school.
- 6.8. Public transport or school coach service: Children assessed as being able to travel by bus, coach or train will be provided with a season ticket or permit to enable them to travel between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day.
- 6.9. Minibus or taxi: This may be offered where a child is assessed as not being able to travel independently by public transport or by designated school coach or where suitably timed public transport does not exist. Where the Council will be providing the transport, the child will have their travel needs assessed for the provision of safe and suitable transport arrangements. This type of transport is shared with other children unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable.

7. Occasions when travel assistance is not supplied or withdrawn

- 7.1. Our duty is to provide travel assistance to get children to and from school at the beginning and end of the school's published day. It is the responsibility of parents, carers or schools to arrange and pay for transport at other times.
- 7.2. Transport will not be provided for the following:
- Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
 - School-to-school placements. This is the responsibility of the school where the child is on roll.
 - Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the school/education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
 - Dissatisfaction with the nearest suitable/designated school. If a child has experienced difficulties at the nearest suitable/designated school and has moved schools for this reason, this does not create an entitlement to free transport.
 - To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
 - To accommodate attendance at school breakfast club, after-school activities or homework clubs.
 - Before or after medical appointments
 - To accommodate work experience or out of school educational placements
 - For pre-course visits, 'taster' days or parents' evenings/visits
 - In the event of sickness where a child has to be collected from school
 - In the event of a fixed term exclusion where a child requires collecting from school
 - Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal school day.
 - School trips or educational visits
 - Part-time attendance
- 7.3. It is the Council's policy to withdraw any transport that has been issued in error. If we find it necessary to withdraw your child's transport, we will write to you giving you the reason. We will also give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to enable you time to make your own alternative arrangements.

8. Operational practices and service limitations

- 8.1. The Council's transport is shared with other children unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable. Examples of reasons for agreeing that a child needs to travel in a vehicle without other passengers are where it's agreed that the safety of the child, driver and/or fellow passengers would be compromised. This will be established during the needs assessment and for children new to transport we would expect that shared transport should be attempted in the first instance.
- 8.2. The Council cannot guarantee the travel arrangements e.g. passenger assistant/driver will stay the same throughout the child's academic career. You will need to

be prepared for this possibility although we will give as much notice as possible when making changes. You should also be prepared for unforeseen circumstances such as illness or vehicle breakdown.

- 8.3. In the morning, you will need to have your child ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving. It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to get the child into the vehicle and the school's responsibility to get the child from the vehicle into the school building.
- 8.4. In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive your child at the arranged time unless it has been agreed between the Council and parent/carer in advance that this is not necessary. Drivers are required to wait only for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other children and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the child may result in the child being taken to a safe place. Costs associated with looking after or transporting your child due to a parent or carer not being ready to receive the child will be passed on to the family. It is also the parent or carer's responsibility to collect their child from the safe place or arrange and pay for their travel home.
- 8.5. Passenger assistants are provided on transport only when it is determined as being required for the needs of the child, and this requirement will be reviewed regularly.
- 8.6. Seat belts must be worn where fitted. In addition, children and young people must not smoke or vape on school transport, drop litter inside the vehicle, eat or drink in the vehicle or stand up or move around in the vehicle whilst it is moving. For some children the needs assessment determines that an additional harness is required for the safety of the child. In these situations, we would be unable to transport a child without the parent's agreement that a harness could be used.
- 8.7. All personal equipment, e.g. musical instruments, laptop, tablets, mobile phones etc, should be secured in a suitable bag. If a child or young person causes damage to a vehicle, the operator may require parents to reimburse them for any repairs. If a child misbehaves persistently on a school vehicle, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action to protect other users of the service. This may involve, among other steps, asking the school to take disciplinary action against the child including issuing a temporary ban from transport.
- 8.8. If the vehicle breaks down, the driver will call for assistance. Children must follow the instructions of the driver. It is normal for children to wait in the vehicle, with the driver and/or escort, until a replacement vehicle arrives.
- 8.9. Children sharing with other children may have to arrive early or have a delayed collection, if safe to do so.
- 8.10. Parents should make contingency plans in the event of transport not turning up or where there are unavoidable delays.
- 8.11. If the child attends a residential school and qualifies for travel assistance, this will only be provided at the start and end of each half-term or each week depending on the boarding arrangements. This will be made clear when the application is approved. Transport is not supplied at other times or for parental/carer visits for meetings.

9. Appeal process

9.1. Applicants have the right to appeal if they disagree with the initial decision. In line with government guidance, the Council operates a two-stage appeal process. The following process must be followed:

9.2. Stage 1 appeal:

- A stage 1 appeal form needs to be completed to make an appeal.
- All stage 1 appeals will be considered by the ISEND Travel Panel (“the Travel Panel”) which consists of senior officers from across the Council. The members of the Travel Panel will consider the appeal form; any information provided in support of the appeal; the application form; supporting information provided with the application; and any other correspondence used by the officer to reach a decision.
- In addition to completing a stage 1 appeal form it is possible to telephone one of our officers who will record your comments in writing and will pass this onto the panel members for their consideration.
- We shall aim to provide you with a decision from your stage 1 appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the application. You will receive an email with the detailed reasoning for the decision. We will also inform you how to escalate your appeal to the next stage if you disagree with the outcome.

9.3 Stage 2 appeal:

- A stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed to make a Stage 2 appeal.
- All stage 2 appeals will be considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel (“the Appeal Panel”). This is made up of three elected County Councillors who are independent of officers and the Stage 1 appeal process. The Appeal Panel will consider the original application and the appeal forms together with any supporting documents or information provided to the Council in relation to the application or the appeal. The Appeal Panel will also consider all verbal information made by the parent/carer (such as via phone calls) where it is provided before the deadline for the meeting. The Appeal Panel may have questions during a hearing and in that situation, they may ask for the supporting officer to seek clarification by making a telephone call to the parent/carer.
- The stage 2 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the family and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. If the appeal refers to financial hardship this needs to be completed on the Stage 2 appeal form.
- It is not usually possible for parents/carers to attend Appeal Panel meetings in person. It may be possible to provide verbal representations at the meeting in exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer would face significant disadvantage in making their appeal without this. Examples of significant disadvantage could include having a relevant disability such as severe dyslexia or a learning difficulty that makes written communication difficult and where it has not been possible to access support to set out in writing the reason for appeal. It is possible to request to make verbal

representations on the Stage 2 appeal form and the request will be considered by the supporting officer. It is expected that the verbal representation will be made via a telephone call or video call for a fixed duration at the start of the Appeal Panel hearing.

- The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be informed of their decision with the detailed reasoning in writing. We will also inform you how to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if you consider there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there were any other irregularities in the way the appeal was handled.
 - If the Appeal Panel is not satisfied it has enough information to reach a decision it may send a letter containing its provisional view on a stage 2 appeal and/or requesting further information. This is called a 'minded to' letter. Where necessary, this letter will be sent within 5 working days of the Appeal Panel meeting. A 'minded to' letter is an opportunity for the appellant to comment on the Appeal Panel's provisional view of the stage 2 appeal, to answer any questions or points of clarification raised in the letter and to provide any further information requested. The letter will set out how long you have to respond to it, but this is usually 7 days. The Appeal Panel will then meet to finally determine your stage 2 appeal taking into account any response to its 'minded to' letter.
- 9.4. More information about the appeals process as well as the appeal forms can be found on the school transport appeals webpage:
<https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/send-transport/travel-assistance-appeals/stage-1-appeals>

10. Review of travel provision

- 10.1. A new application must be made if the child moves to a new home or other circumstances change.
- 10.2. Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in parents or carers having to pay back for costs incurred by the Council. We will also make regular checks to ensure the eligibility criteria continue to be met.
- 10.3. The mode of travel assistance being offered will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the child's needs and the most cost effective for the Council.

11. Vacant seat scheme

- 11.1. Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the Council, the parent/carer may be able to apply for a vacant seat. This is only possible for some routes to schools. We can only give seats on our existing vehicles where there are spaces available and when it does not increase the cost to the Council. This means we are not able to offer a seat to everyone.
- 11.2. The charge for the 2023/24 school year is as follows (reviewed annually):

- Primary school children: £94.35 per term based on a 6-term year or £566.10 per year.
 - Secondary school children: £188.70 per term based on a 6-term year or £1,132.20 per year.
- 11.3. It may be necessary for the parent/carer to take their child to an existing pick up point. If a change is made to the shared route which means that the cost of the vacant seat increases, this increase may be passed onto the parent/carer, or the offer of the vacant seat withdrawn. We will have to withdraw the vacant seat offer if we need the seat for someone else who qualifies for free transport or if we no longer have anyone on the route that qualifies for free transport. The Council will give as much notice as possible however the minimum notice given will be one week.
- 11.4. Further information is available on our website at: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel

12. Travel assistance for early years children

- 12.1. Children below compulsory school age attending the nearest suitable special school for assessment purposes may be entitled to home to pre-school transport if it's decided that it is necessary. The officer will consider the individual circumstances of each case and will consider whether it is reasonably practical in the circumstances of each case for parents/carers to accompany the child or make the travel arrangements themselves.
- 12.2. Where travel assistance is agreed, a contribution towards the cost of travel is required. The contribution is based on the current cost of a 'Freedom' bus ticket and is reviewed annually. In the academic year 2023/24 this is £570 per year.
- 12.3. Low-income families are required to contribute half of the amount - £285 in 2023/24. To qualify as Low Income, the applicant must meet the same eligibility criteria as for Free School Meals. More information on eligibility can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals>
- 12.4. An invoice will be sent, and payment usually needs to be made in 10 monthly instalments. Payment will usually be made via Direct Debit except where another payment method has been agreed.
- 12.5. Transport will not usually be arranged until the first payment is made. Transport may be ceased if payments are not made on schedule - if this occurs the Council will first contact the parent/carer to try and avoid this action.

13. Travel assistance for post-16 SEND students

- 13.1. Once young people with SEND reach school leaving age, the help councils must give them with transport to school or college changes. They do not automatically get the free school transport that younger children are entitled to.
- 13.2. Further information on the assistance we provide to over 16s and how to apply can be found on our web pages and in the following policies:
- travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

- travel assistance policy for post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

Visit <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>.

14. Policy changes

- 14.1. The Council reserves the right to make minor amendments or corrections to this policy without consulting on them.
- 14.2. Where proposals to change the policy may affect children's eligibility for transport, we will consult for a minimum of 28 days during term time. Consultees will include schools, parents of children who will (or may) be affected by the proposed changes, including those whose children attend school in a neighbouring authority, and those whose children may be affected in the future.
- 14.3. Wherever possible, changes will be phased in so that children who begin attending a school under one set of travel arrangements continue to benefit from those arrangements until they leave that school.

15. Complaints

- 15.1. The Council is here to help and support the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face-to-face.
- 15.2. Sometimes things go wrong, and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the Council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or impolitely. We cannot investigate matters that are subject to the two-stage appeals process.
- 15.3. Complaints regarding the service provided on a vehicle organised by the Council, or concerns about transport arrangements should be directed to:
Email: compliance.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk or telephone 01273 335 577
- 15.4. Complaints can also be made to the Children's Services Customer Relations Team.
[Feedback and complaints about Children's Services | East Sussex County Council](#)
- 15.5. You can also submit your complaint by email CS.Customerrelations@eastsussex.gov.uk or by post to: East G, County Hall, Lewes, BN7 1UE.

16. Summary of the application process

- 16.1. A summary of the overall process follows:
 1. Apply
 - a) Use the online form to apply.
 - b) We can post you a paper form if you prefer.
 2. Application considered
 - a) An officer will consider the application form and any supporting evidence.

- b) We may contact you to find out more about the child and their needs.
 - c) We aim to inform you of a decision within 10 working days of receipt of the application form, but some applications can take longer to process.
- 3. Decision
 - a) You will be informed in writing of the officer's decision.
- 4. Needs assessment
 - a) If the officer determines that transport is necessary, a needs assessment whilst travelling will be completed.
- 5. Organise transport
 - a) On completion of the needs assessment, it can take up to 15 working days for suitable transport to be organised.
 - b) Parent notified of the travel arrangements.
- 6. Stage 1 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the decision, you can request a Stage 1 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 1 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 1 appeals are considered by the ISEND Travel Panel who meet monthly to consider cases.
 - d) You should receive a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form.
- 7. Stage 2 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the Stage 1 decision, you can request a Stage 2 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 2 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 2 appeals are considered by The Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel.
 - d) The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application form.
 - e) You will receive a written decision from the Appeal Panel within 5 working days of the meeting.

Travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)



Date: 14 November 2023

Document purpose

This policy sets out how East Sussex County Council (“the Council”) will decide eligibility for travel support for learners aged 16 to 19 who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In formulating this policy the Council has had regard to the statutory guidance on “Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training”.

Please [contact us](#) if you’d like this document translated into another language or need other assistance reading this document.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy explains the Council’s statutory responsibility in respect of travel assistance for students aged 16 to 19. It states how to apply for travel assistance and how eligibility is determined and assessed.
- 1.2. This policy applies to students over compulsory school age but under 19 (or those who began a course of education or training before turning 19 and are still attending that course). This refers to those in school years 12, 13 and 14.
- 1.3. Separate policies set out the provision for children of compulsory school age and adult learners over 19 years of age. Find out more on our web page:
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>

2. Local authority responsibility

- 2.1. Once young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) leave school leaving age, the help councils must give them with transport to school or college changes. They do not automatically get the free school transport that younger children are entitled to.
- 2.2. Statutory guidance states that if someone asks a council for transport assistance for a young person over 16 years old it must assess their situation and ensure that its decision to provide transport or other assistance is a reasonable one, taking into account all relevant matters. Councils are expected to target support at those who need it most. The Council is committed to providing travel assistance to post 16 students with SEND, when their SEND and circumstances mean that they could not otherwise access their placement.
- 2.3. The Council must prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training. This can be found at:
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>
- 2.4. The law concerning education transport is set out in the Education Act 1996 (as amended) (“the Act”). The Act divides children and young people into three groups: children of compulsory school age; young people of sixth form age; and adult learners. For sixth form age students, if transport assistance is requested, this will be assessed and provided where necessary. Section 509AC(1) states that sixth form age is determined as those who are (a) under the age of 19; or (b) began a course of education or training before the age of 19 and continues to attend that course.
- 2.5. Statutory guidance from the Department for Education ‘Transport to education and training for people aged 16 and over’ (2019) states that local authorities

may ask learners and their parents/carers for a contribution to transport costs for young people of sixth form age.

3. Criteria for travel assistance

- 3.1. The following gateway criteria must be met for an application for travel assistance to be considered.
 - The student lives in East Sussex.
 - The student has a current EHC plan.
 - The student will be attending the equivalent of a full-time educational course which allows for appropriate progression.
 - The placement is the nearest suitable college to their home address and named in the student's EHC plan.
 - The student does not have the ability to travel independently.
- 3.2. If these gateway criteria are met, the Council will then consider the circumstances of the student and the family and their broader network, to assess whether it is necessary to provide transport for the student. The Council thinks it is reasonable for parents/carers to prioritise transporting the student over other commitments. Further information on how this will be considered can be found in section 6 below.
- 3.3. Students in the care of a local authority or a fostering agency are treated no differently from other students with regard to eligibility for assistance with transport.
- 3.4. Travel assistance to respite care is also discretionary and can be requested. The Council will separately consider requests for transport to a respite care placement under the same discretionary criteria, on term time days only. An additional charge may be made for transport to respite if approved.

4. Contribution towards post-16 travel assistance

- 4.1. Where travel assistance is agreed, a contribution towards the cost of travel is required. The contribution is based on the current cost of a 'Freedom' bus ticket and is reviewed annually. In the academic year 2023/24 this is £570 per year.
- 4.2. Low-income families are required to contribute half of the amount - £285. To qualify as Low Income, the applicant must meet the same eligibility criteria as for Free School Meals. More information on eligibility can be found on ESCC's website at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals>
- 4.3. An invoice will be sent, and payment usually needs to be made in 10 monthly instalments. Payment will usually be made via Direct Debit except where another payment method has been agreed.
- 4.4. Transport will not usually be arranged until the first payment is made. Transport may be ceased if payments are not made on schedule - if this occurs the Council will first contact the parent/carer to try and avoid this action.

5. Application process

- 5.1. The quickest and most secure way to make an application is online using the application form found in the following section of the Council's website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel. On submission of an online application form, you will get an automated email acknowledgement. Alternatively, we can send you a paper copy of the form on request. Support with completing the application form can be provided by your assigned key worker or Assessment and Planning Officer (APO).
- 5.2. A new application is required for everyone requesting 16-19 travel assistance whether the student is remaining in the same school or moving to a new place of learning. In addition, a new application is needed for each new course or placement or when the student moves home address.
- 5.3. Applications will be considered to determine if the gateway criteria as set out in section 3 are met. More information may be sought to help with the decision. Information on how the decision is made can be found in the next section.
- 5.4. On average it could take 20 days for a decision to be communicated to the applicant. It can take additional time to reach a decision depending on the timing of the application and whether further information needs to be requested.
- 5.5. Reimbursements for travel costs incurred before an application is approved, and travel assistance arranged will not be made.
- 5.6. If you disagree with the decision, you can lodge an appeal. Further information on how to appeal can be found in section 11.

6. How decisions are made

- 6.1. All applications will be considered by an officer. They will consider the individual circumstances of each case and will not apply blanket policies or make assumptions about accompaniment. They will consider whether it is reasonably practical in the circumstances of each case for parents/carers to accompany the student or make the travel arrangements themselves. Applications will be assessed on the evidence provided, but the officer may request additional information. The officer will consider whether it is necessary for the Council to provide travel assistance in each case, rather than the student or family making their own travel arrangements. In some cases, the officer will seek advice from the senior officers attending the ISEND Travel Panel (see section 11.2 for further details about this panel).
- 6.2. The officer will use the information provided in the application, any other email correspondence with the Council in relation to the provision of transport as well as verbal information provided during phone calls.
- 6.3. In considering the eligibility of the student to receive an offer and what offer should be made, the officer will consider the following and/or any other relevant factors:
 - Nature of the journey for the student/family for example, the distance, likely journey time, and complexity of the journey by road, public transport

or on foot; whether the journey could be reasonably made if the student is accompanied.

- Parent/carer/broader network availability to accompany for example, the current commitments of the parent(s)/carer(s) and broader network; whether the student's family or broader network is reasonably able to transport or accompany them, given all other factors. Parents/carers will be expected to prioritise transporting the student over other commitments such as (but not exclusively):
 - taking pre-school aged children to nursery;
 - voluntary work;
 - undertaking work commitments that can reasonably be carried out at times other than at college start and end times, for example when self-employed or on flexible work contracts.

unless doing so is unreasonable in all the circumstances.

- Available suitable vehicle and/or disability benefits for example, whether the family has a suitable vehicle, which may include a Motability vehicle; whether the student is receiving PIP with a component intended to support travel; any current social care support.
- The student's needs relating to travel for example, whether the student has complex needs, and/or requires a second person on transport; if independent travel is a realistic goal, and whether this has been appropriately encouraged by the family.
- Other relevant factors, for example, the health of the parent/carer and the potential impact of providing transport or accompanying the student, given all other factors.

6.4. The following evidence may be required in addition to an application for travel assistance:

- Recent evidence from a relevant health and/or educational professional regarding the SEND of the student and how this impacts on the need for travel assistance, their ability to walk or travel on public transport, accompanied or otherwise.
- Recent evidence from a relevant health professional regarding a parent/carer's health, if this means that they are not able to accompany or transport the student themselves.
- Evidence from the parent/carer's employer regarding their work commitments, to include working hours, days, times, location of work and distance in miles from home to work and from the placement to work.
- Written evidence to demonstrate other commitments, although broader caring responsibilities would not normally be considered as a reason why a parent/carer would not be able to transport the student, as the family would be expected to find alternative solutions in most cases.

6.5. Occasionally a student will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In this situation, the address used for determining transport will be the one at which the student spends most of their time including weekends and college holidays as well as during the week. The Council may consider factors such as where the student is registered with a doctor or which parent receives child benefit. In cases where

parents state the student splits their time equally between addresses, the Council will use the address which is closer to the school/college attended for transport eligibility purposes.

7. What happens if travel assistance is approved

7.1. Applications are processed in three stages.

- Stage one - determining eligibility. Officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 20 working days of receiving an application. This may take longer depending on the complexity of the decision.
- Stage two - assessing needs on transport. A full needs assessment will be completed detailing the student's needs on transport and any medical issues they may have to ensure they are safely transported. The time this takes will vary depending on the needs of the student. The applicant will be kept up to date with the progress of this stage.
- Stage three - setting up transport. An officer will determine which mode of travel is appropriate based on the needs assessment and then will set this up. This can take up to 15 working days depending on the complexity of the needs of the student.

7.2. Whilst every effort will be made to complete the transport arrangements as quickly as possible, you will need to make your own travel arrangements until this is set up. We will not reimburse for any costs incurred during this time.

7.3. It is for the Council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get pupils between home and college, taking account of any special arrangements to support the student's particular needs. Once this task has been completed, the Transport Hub will contact parents by email or telephone to advise them of the arrangements. Parents are not able to choose which form of transport or specific vehicle their child will travel on. If you disagree with the type of assistance being offered, you should contact the Transport Hub (email specialist-transport.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk or phone 01273 335 067) to discuss your concerns. If they are unable to resolve your query, you can then raise a complaint (see section 14 below)

7.4. Consideration will be given to the most suitable travel assistance for the student. This will be in the form of:

- Independent travel training
- Personal travel budget
- Minibus or taxi.

7.5. Independent travel training (ITT): ITT is the process by which a person learns to make a journey between two places on their own and in safety - in this case the journey between home and college. The training supports the student to gain additional independence by providing extra help or support to make journeys alone using public transport (and walking or cycling as necessary). Students will be considered for an assessment for their suitability for ITT and we expect parents/carers to positively engage with this process. Where students are assessed as being suitable for ITT and the student and/or their family/carer do

not positively engage with ITT, an offer of travel assistance may be withdrawn. At the end of the ITT, the student will be assessed on their ability to travel independently. When the student has been assessed to have completed the ITT, and therefore able to travel independently, the travel assistance will be ceased or amended accordingly.

- 7.6. Personal travel budget (PTB): A family may be offered a PTB which provides financial assistance for families to organise transport to school/college.
- 7.7. Minibus or taxi: Where the Council will be providing the transport, the student will have their travel needs assessed for the provision of safe and suitable transport arrangements. This type of transport is shared with other students unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable.

8. Limitations of the travel assistance we provide

- 8.1. Students will usually only be transported at published school/college start and finish times, and they may be expected to enable sharing with other students through early arrival or delayed collection if safe to do so; or students may need to arrive earlier or leave later than their taught hours in college.
- 8.2. An offer of travel assistance may be part-week or involve a pick-up or drop-off point, i.e. not door to door. This will, however, be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the student's needs.

9. Occasions when travel assistance is not supplied or withdrawn

- 9.1. The Council will only provide travel assistance to get students to and from college at the beginning and end of the college's published day. It is the responsibility of parents, carers or colleges to arrange and pay for transport at other times.
- 9.2. Transport will not be provided for the following:
 - Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
 - Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the college/education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
 - To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
 - To accommodate attendance at college breakfast club, after-school activities or homework clubs.
 - Before or after medical appointments
 - To accommodate work experience or off-site educational placements
 - For pre-course visits, 'taster' days or parents' evenings/visits
 - In the event of sickness where a student has to be collected from college
 - Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal college day
 - College trips or educational visits

- 9.3. It is the Council's policy to withdraw any transport that has been issued in error. If we find it necessary to withdraw a student's transport, we will write to the parent/carer giving the full reasons. We will also give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to enable time to make alternative arrangements.

10. Operational practices and service limitations

- 10.1. The Council's transport is shared with other students unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable. Examples of reasons for agreeing that a student needs to travel in a vehicle without other passengers are where it's agreed that the safety of the student, driver and/or fellow passengers would be compromised. This will be established during the needs assessment.
- 10.2. The Council cannot guarantee the travel arrangements e.g. passenger assistant/driver will stay the same throughout the college course. You will need to be prepared for this possibility although we will give as much notice as possible when making changes. You should also be prepared for unforeseen circumstances such as illness or vehicle breakdown.
- 10.3. In the morning, you will need to have the student ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving. Where required, it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to get the student into the vehicle and the college's responsibility to get the student from the vehicle into the building.
- 10.4. In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student at the arranged time unless it has been agreed between the Council and parent/carer in advance that this is not necessary. Drivers are required to wait only for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other students and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student may result in the student being taken to a safe place. Costs associated with looking after or transporting the student due to a parent or carer not being ready to receive the student will be passed on to the family. It is also the parent or carer's responsibility to collect the student from the safe place or arrange and pay for their travel home.
- 10.5. Passenger assistants are provided on transport only when it is determined as being required for the needs of the student, and this requirement will be reviewed regularly.
- 10.6. Expected behaviour on college transport - Seat belts must be worn where fitted. In addition, students must not smoke or vape on college transport, drop litter inside the vehicle, eat or drink in the vehicle or stand up or move around in the vehicle whilst it is moving. For some students the needs assessment determines that an additional harness is required for the safety of the student. In these situations, we would be unable to transport a student without the parent's agreement that a harness could be used.
- 10.7. All personal equipment, e.g. musical instruments, laptop, tablets, mobile phones etc, should be secured in a suitable bag. If a student causes damage to a vehicle, the operator may require parents to reimburse them for any repairs. If

a student misbehaves persistently on a vehicle, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action to protect other users of the service. This may involve, among other steps, asking the school/college to take disciplinary action against the student including issuing a temporary ban from transport.

- 10.8. Vehicle breakdowns - If the vehicle breaks down, the driver will call for assistance. Passengers must follow the instructions of the driver. It is normal for students to wait in the vehicle, with the driver and/or passenger assistant, until a replacement vehicle arrives.
- 10.9. Students sharing with other students may have to arrive early or have a delayed collection, if safe to do so.
- 10.10. Parents should make contingency plans in the event of transport not turning up or where there are unavoidable delays.
- 10.11. If the student attends a residential college and qualifies for travel assistance, this will only be provided at the start and end of each half-term or each week depending on the boarding arrangements. This will be made clear when the application is approved. We do not provide transport at other times or for parent/carer visits for meetings.

11. Appeal process

- 11.1. Applicants have the right to appeal if they disagree with the initial decision. The Council operates a two-stage appeal process.
- 11.2. Stage 1 appeal:
 - A stage 1 appeal form needs to be completed to make an appeal. All stage 1 appeals will be considered by the ISEND Travel Panel (“the Travel Panel”) which consists of senior officers from across the Council. The members of the Travel Panel will consider the appeal form; any information provided in support of the appeal; the application form; supporting information provided with the application; and any other correspondence used by the officer to reach a decision. The stage 1 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the family and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. The applicant will need to provide financial information on the appeal form if they want their financial circumstances to be considered.
 - In addition to completing a stage 1 appeal form it is possible to telephone one of our officers who will record your comments in writing and will pass this onto the panel members for their consideration. We shall aim to provide you with a decision from your stage 1 appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the application. You will receive an email with the detailed reasoning for the decision. We will also inform you how to escalate your appeal to the next stage if you disagree with the outcome.
- 11.3. Stage 2 appeal:
 - A stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed to make a Stage 2 appeal.
 - All stage 2 appeals will be considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel (“the Appeal Panel”). This is made up of three elected County Councillors who are independent of officers and the Stage 1 appeal process.

The Appeal Panel will consider the original application and the appeal forms together with any supporting documents or information provided to the Council in relation to the application or the appeal. The Appeal Panel will also consider all verbal information made by the parent/carer (such as via phone calls) where it is provided before the deadline for the meeting. The Appeal Panel may have questions during a hearing and in that situation, they may ask for the supporting officer to seek clarification by making a telephone call to the parent/carer.

- The stage 2 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the family and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. If the appeal refers to financial hardship, and the financial information was not completed on the stage 1 appeal form, this needs to be completed on the Stage 2 appeal form.
- It is not usually possible for students/parents/carers to attend Appeal Panel meetings in person. It may be possible to provide verbal representations at the meeting in exceptional circumstances where a student/parent/carer would face significant disadvantage in making their appeal without this. Examples of significant disadvantage could include having a relevant disability such as severe dyslexia or a learning difficulty that makes written communication difficult and where it has not been possible to access support to set out in writing the reason for appeal. It is possible to request to make verbal representations on the Stage 2 appeal form and the request will be considered by the supporting officer. It is expected that the verbal representation will be made via a telephone call or video call for a fixed duration at the start of the Appeal Panel hearing.
- The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be informed of their decision with the detailed reasoning in writing. We will also inform you how to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if you consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there were any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.
- If the Appeal Panel is not satisfied it has enough information to reach a decision it may send a letter containing its provisional view on a stage 2 appeal and/or requesting further information. This is called a 'minded to' letter. Where necessary, this letter will be sent within 5 working days of the Appeal Panel meeting. A minded to letter is an opportunity for the appellant to comment on the Appeal Panel's provisional view of the stage 2 appeal, to answer any questions or points of clarification raised in the letter and to provide any further information requested. The letter will set out how long you have to respond to it, but this is usually 7 days. The Appeal Panel will then meet to finally determine your stage 2 appeal taking into account any response to its minded to letter.

11.4. More information about the appeals process, as well as the appeal forms can be found on the school transport appeals webpage:

<https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/send-transport/travel-assistance-appeals/stage-1-appeals>

12. Review of travel provision

- 12.1. A new application must be made if the student moves to a new home or the family's circumstances change.
- 12.2. Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in having to pay back for costs incurred by the Council.
- 12.3. The mode of travel assistance being offered will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the student's needs and the most cost effective for the Council.

13. Other travel assistance available if application declined

- 13.1. Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the Council, the parent/carer may consider applying for one of the following:
- 13.2. Mileage allowance: This scheme is only available to low-income parents/carers who have to travel long distances (over 10 miles) to transport a student to the college indicated in their EHC plan. The mileage allowance given will be 25p per mile for one return journey per day and only for the miles beyond the first 10 miles of the journey from home. For example, where the distance from home to college is 15 miles, the allowance given will be calculated as 2 journeys x 5 miles x 25p. Proof of attendance will be sought from the school/college. The following criteria must apply for claims for mileage allowance to be considered:
 - The family qualifies as low income using the same criteria for free school meals eligibility. Further information can be found at: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals>
 - The student is attending the college named in their EHC plan.
 - The journey exceeds 10 miles between home and college.
- 13.3. Vacant seat scheme: Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the Council, the parent/carer may be able to apply for a vacant seat. This is only possible for some routes to colleges and we can only give seats on our existing vehicles where there are spaces available and where the proposed addition does not negatively affect existing travellers or the safety of the vehicle. This means we are not able to offer a seat to everyone. The charge for the 2023/24 school year is £188.70 per term based on a 6-term year or £1,132.20 per year (reviewed annually). It may be necessary for the student to get themselves or be taken to an existing stop. If a change is made to the shared route which means that the cost of the vacant seat increases, this increase may be passed onto the parent/carer, or the offer of the vacant seat withdrawn. We will have to withdraw the vacant seat offer if we need the seat for someone else who qualifies for free transport or if we no longer have anyone on the route that qualifies for free transport. We will give as much notice as possible however the minimum notice given will be one week. Further information is available on our website at: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel

14. Policy changes

- 14.1. If the Council makes any change to this policy which is assessed as likely to have an impact on current and prospective students, the Council will inform the immediately affected families at the earliest opportunity. Such changes may include, but are not limited to, changes required by the impact of further cost saving requirements placed upon the Council and further limitations on the support given.

15. Complaints

- 15.1. The Council is here to help and support the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.
- 15.2. Sometimes things go wrong, and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the Council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or impolitely. We cannot investigate matters that are subject to the two-stage appeals process.
- 15.3. Complaints regarding the service provided on a vehicle organised by the Council, or concerns about transport arrangements should be directed to:
Email: compliance.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk or telephone 01273 335 577
- 15.4. Complaints can also be made online to the Children's Services Customer Relations Team. [Feedback and complaints about Children's Services | East Sussex County Council](#)
- 15.5. You can also submit your complaint by email
CS.Customerrelations@eastsussex.gov.uk or by post to: East G, County Hall, Lewes, BN7 1UE

16. Summary of the application process

- 16.1. A summary of the overall process follows:
1. Apply
 - a) Applicants should review the gateway criteria set out in section 3.1.
 - b) Use the online form to apply.
 - c) We can post you a paper form if you prefer.
 2. Application considered
 - a) An officer will consider the application form and any supporting evidence.
 - b) We may contact you to find out more about the student and their circumstances.

- c) We aim to inform you of a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form, but some applications can take longer to process.
- 3. Decision
 - a) You will be informed in writing of the officer's decision.
- 4. Needs assessment
 - a) If the officer determines that transport is necessary, a needs assessment whilst travelling will be completed.
- 5. Pay parental contribution
 - a) Financial contributions will need to be set up before transport is finalised.
 - b) Contributions can be made in full or in instalments via Direct Debit
- 6. Organise transport
 - a) On completion of the needs assessment, it can take up to 15 working days for suitable transport to be organised.
 - b) Parent notified of the travel arrangements.
- 7. Stage 1 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the decision, you can request a Stage 1 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 1 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 1 appeals are considered by the ISEND Travel Panel who meet monthly to consider cases.
 - d) You should receive a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form.
- 8. Stage 2 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the Stage 1 decision, you can request a Stage 2 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 2 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 2 appeals are considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel.
 - d) The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application form.
 - e) You will receive a written decision from the Appeal Panel within 5 working days of the meeting.

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Travel assistance policy for post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)



Date: 14 November 2023

Document purpose

This policy sets out how East Sussex County Council (“the Council”) will decide eligibility for travel support for learners aged 19 to 25 who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In formulating this policy the Council has had regard to the statutory guidance on “Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training” and in relation to the duty set out in section 508F Education Act 1996.

Please [contact us](#) if you’d like this document translated into another language or need other assistance reading this document.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy explains the Council's statutory responsibility in respect of travel assistance for adult learners. It states how to apply for travel assistance and how eligibility is determined and assessed. Adult learners are those aged 19 and over who started their programme of learning after their 19th birthday and for whom an EHC plan is maintained.
- 1.2. Separate policies set out the provision for children of compulsory school age and students aged 16 to 19. Find out more on our web page:
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/strategy>

2. Local authority responsibility

- 2.1. Statutory guidance states that if someone asks a council for transport assistance for a young adult over 19 years old it must assess their situation and decide whether to provide transport or financial support reasonably, taking into account all relevant matters. Councils are expected to target support at those who need it most. The Council is committed to providing travel assistance to post 19 learners with SEND, when their SEND and circumstances mean that they could not otherwise access their placement.
- 2.2. The law concerning education transport is set out in the Education Act 1996 as amended ("the Act"). The Act divides children and young people into three groups: children of compulsory school age; young people of sixth form age; and adult learners. For adult learners, councils must 'make arrangements they consider necessary to facilitate their attendance'. Statutory Guidance 'Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training' (January 2019) notes that the overall intention of the adult transport duty is to ensure that 'those with the most severe disabilities with no other means of transportation can undertake further education and training after their 19th birthday to help them move towards more independent living.'
- 2.3. Section 508F of the Act requires local authorities to make transport arrangements they consider "necessary" to facilitate the attendance of relevant young adults (defined as adults for whom an EHC plan is maintained) at institutions where the local authority has secured the provision of education for the adult learner concerned. When a council finds it is 'necessary' to provide transport for the young adult under section 508F, then the transport must be provided and be free of charge (the Act, section 508F(4)).

3. Criteria for travel assistance

- 3.1. The following gateway criteria must be met for an application for travel assistance to be considered.
 - The adult learner lives in East Sussex.
 - The adult learner has a current EHC plan.
 - The adult learner will be attending the equivalent of a full-time educational course which allows for appropriate progression.

- The placement is the nearest suitable college to their home address and named in the learner's EHC plan.
 - The adult learner does not have the ability to travel independently.
- 3.2. If these gateway criteria are met, the Council will then consider the circumstances of the adult learner including any support their parent/carer and their broader network are able to provide, to assess whether it is necessary to provide transport for the adult learner. Further information on how this will be considered can be found in section 5 below.
- 3.3. Travel assistance to respite care is also discretionary and can be requested. The Council will separately consider requests for transport to a respite care placement under the same discretionary criteria, on term time days only. A charge may be made for transport to respite if approved.

4. Application process

- 4.1. The quickest and most secure way to make an application is online using the application form found in the following section of the Council's website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel On submission of an online application form, you will get an automated email acknowledgement. Alternatively, we can send you a paper copy of the form on request. Support with completing the application form can be provided by your assigned key worker or Assessment and Planning Officer (APO).
- 4.2. A new application is required for everyone requesting post-19 travel assistance whether the adult learner is remaining in the same college or moving to a new place of learning. In addition, a new application is needed for each new course or placement or when the adult learner moves home address.
- 4.3. Applications will be considered to determine if the gateway criteria as set out in section 3 are met. More information may be sought to help with the decision. Information on how the decision is made can be found in the next section.
- 4.4. On average it could take 20 days for a decision to be communicated to the applicant. It can take additional time to reach a decision depending on the timing of the application and whether further information needs to be requested.
- 4.5. The application needs to make clear whether the learner is living independently from their family and what support that family can offer in respect of travel to college. If the learner is living with family, the officer will use this information to decide if it is necessary to provide travel assistance.
- 4.6. Reimbursements for travel costs incurred before an application is approved, and travel assistance arranged will not be made.
- 4.7. If you disagree with the decision, you can lodge an appeal. Further information on how to appeal can be found in section 10.

5. How decisions are made

- 5.1. All applications will be considered by an officer. They will consider the individual circumstances of each case and will not apply blanket policies or make assumptions about accompaniment. Applications will be assessed based on the evidence provided but the officer may request additional information. The officer will consider whether it is necessary for the Council to provide travel assistance in each case. In some cases, the officer will seek advice from the senior officers attending the ISEND Travel Panel (see section 10.2. for further details about this panel).
- 5.2. The officer will use the information provided in the application, a financial statement provided as part of the application and any other email correspondence with the

Council in relation to the provision of transport as well as verbal information provided during phone calls.

5.3. In considering the eligibility of the adult learner to receive an offer and what offer should be made, the officer will consider the following and/or any other relevant factors:

- Nature of the journey for the adult learner for example, the distance, likely journey time, and complexity of the journey by road, public transport or on foot; whether the journey could be reasonably made if the adult learner is accompanied.
- Parent/carer/broader network ability to provide transport support, e.g. accompanying the learner on some journeys; transporting the learner on certain days.
- Available suitable vehicle for example, whether the adult learner has a vehicle for their use, which may include a Motability vehicle.
- The adult learner's needs relating to travel for example, whether the adult learner has complex needs, and/or requires a second person on transport; if independent travel is a realistic goal.
- Any income available to the young adult that can reasonably be expected to be used to fund transport to and from college. This may include, for example, a college bursary, disability benefits or the mobility component of personal independence payments (PIP).
- The financial circumstances of the adult learner and potential impact of a declined application. A financial statement will be requested in support of the application to determine reasonable outgoings on essential items.
- Advice from the college, for example, whether independent travel training is part of the learning programme.
- Other relevant factors.

The following evidence may be required in addition to an application for travel assistance:

- Recent evidence from a relevant health and/or educational professional regarding the SEND of the adult learner and how this impacts on the need for travel assistance, their ability to walk or travel on public transport, accompanied or otherwise.
- A copy of the care and support plan (if applicable).
- Where the parent/carer is stated as being the primary carer/advocate for the adult learner and/or in receipt of carer's allowance, further evidence may be required regarding the support with transport they are able to provide (if any).

5.4. Occasionally an adult learner will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In this situation, the address used for determining transport will be the one at which the adult learner spends most of their time including weekends and college holidays as well as during the week. The Council may consider factors such as where the adult learner is registered with a doctor. In cases where parents state the adult learner splits their time equally between addresses, the Council will use the address which is closer to the college attended for transport eligibility purposes.

6. What happens if travel assistance is approved

6.1. Applications are processed in three stages.

- Stage one - determining eligibility. Officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 10 working days of receiving an application. This may take longer depending on the complexity of the decision.
- Stage two - assessing needs on transport. A full needs assessment will be completed detailing the adult learner's needs on transport and any medical issues they may have to ensure they are safely transported. The time this takes will vary depending on the needs of the adult learner. The applicant will be kept up to date with the progress of this stage.
- Stage three - setting up transport. An officer will determine which mode of travel is appropriate based on the needs assessment and then will set this up. This can take up to 15 working days depending on the complexity of the needs of the adult learner.

6.2. Whilst every effort will be made to complete the transport arrangements as quickly as possible, you will need to make your own travel arrangements until this is set up. We will not reimburse for any costs incurred during this time.

6.3. It is for the Council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get pupils between home and college, taking account of any special arrangements to support the adult learner's particular needs. Once this task has been completed, the Transport Hub will contact parents by email or telephone to advise them of the arrangements. Parents are not able to choose which form of transport or specific vehicle their adult learner will travel on. If you disagree with the type of assistance being offered, you should contact the CET Transport Hub (CET CTS Specialist Transport specialist-transport.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk or 01273 335 067) to discuss your concerns. If they are unable to resolve your query, you can then raise a complaint (see section 14 below).

6.4. Consideration will be given to the most suitable travel assistance for the adult learner. This will be in the form of:

- Independent travel training
- Personal travel budget
- Minibus or taxi.

6.5. Independent travel training (ITT): ITT is the process by which a person learns to make a journey between two places on their own and in safety - in this case the journey between home and college. The training supports the adult learner to gain additional independence by providing extra help or support to make journeys alone using public transport (and walking or cycling as necessary). Adult learners will be considered for an assessment for their suitability for ITT and we expect parents/carers to positively engage with this process. Where adult learners are assessed as being suitable for ITT and they and/or their family/carer do not positively engage with ITT, an offer of travel assistance may be withdrawn. At the end of the ITT, the learner will be assessed on their ability to travel independently. When they have been assessed to have completed the ITT, and therefore able to travel independently, the travel assistance will be ceased or amended accordingly.

6.6. Personal travel budget (PTB): An adult learner, parent or carer may be offered a PTB to provide financial assistance to organise transport to college.

6.7. Minibus or taxi: Where the Council will be providing the transport, the adult learner will have their travel needs assessed for the provision of safe and suitable transport

arrangements. This type of transport is shared with other passengers unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable.

7. Limitations of the travel assistance we provide

- 7.1. Adult learners will usually only be transported at published college start and finish times, and they may be expected to enable sharing with other adult learners through early arrival or delayed collection if safe to do so; or adult learners may need to arrive earlier or leave later than their taught hours in college.
- 7.2. An offer of travel assistance may be part-week or involve a pick-up or drop-off point, i.e. not door to door. This will, however, be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the adult learner's needs and finances.

8. Occasions when travel assistance is not supplied or withdrawn

- 8.1. The Council will only provide travel assistance to get adult learners to and from college at the beginning and end of the college's published day. It is the responsibility of parents, carers or colleges to arrange and pay for transport at other times.
- 8.2. Transport will not be provided for the following:
 - Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
 - Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the college /education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
 - To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
 - To accommodate attendance at after-college activities or homework clubs.
 - Before or after medical appointments
 - To accommodate work experience or off-site educational placements
 - For pre-course visits, 'taster' days or parents' evenings/visits
 - In the event of sickness where an adult learner has to be collected from college
 - Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal college day
 - College trips or educational visits
- 8.3. It is the Council's policy to withdraw any transport that has been issued in error. If we find it necessary to withdraw the adult learner's transport, we will write to you giving you the reason. We will also give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to enable you time to make your own alternative arrangements.

9. Operational practices and service limitations

- 9.1. The Council's transport is shared with other passengers unless the safety of the adult learner and vehicle will be compromised. Examples of reasons for agreeing that an adult learner needs to travel in a vehicle without other passengers are where it's agreed that the safety of the adult learner, driver and/or fellow passengers would be compromised. This will be established during the needs assessment.

- 9.2. The Council cannot guarantee the travel arrangements e.g. passenger assistant/ driver will stay the same throughout the college course. You will need to be prepared for this possibility although we will give as much notice as possible when making changes. You should also be prepared for unforeseen circumstances such as illness or vehicle breakdown.
- 9.3. In the morning, you will need to have the adult learner ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving.
- 9.4. In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student at the arranged time unless it has been agreed between the Council and parent/carer in advance that this is not necessary. Drivers are required to wait only for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other students and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student may result in the student being taken to a safe place. Costs associated with looking after or transporting the student due to a parent or carer not being ready to receive the student will be passed on to the family. It is also the parent or carer's responsibility to collect the student from the safe place or arrange and pay for their travel home.
- 9.5. Passenger assistants are provided on transport only when it is determined as being required for the needs of the adult learner, and this requirement will be reviewed regularly.
- 9.6. Expected behaviour on council organised transport - Seat belts must be worn where fitted. In addition, adult learners must not smoke or vape on college transport, drop litter inside the vehicle, eat or drink in the vehicle or stand up or move around in the vehicle whilst it is moving.
- 9.7. All personal equipment, e.g. musical instruments, laptop, tablets, mobile phones etc, should be secured in a suitable bag. If an adult learner causes damage to a vehicle, the operator may make a request to be reimbursed for any repairs. If an adult learner misbehaves persistently on a college vehicle, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action to protect other users of the service. This may involve, among other steps, issuing a ban on transport.
- 9.8. Vehicle breakdowns - If the vehicle breaks down, the driver will call for assistance. Passengers must follow the instructions of the driver. It is normal for passengers to wait in the vehicle, with the driver and/or passenger assistant, until a replacement vehicle arrives.
- 9.9. Adult learners sharing with other passengers may have to arrive early or have a delayed collection if safe to do so.
- 9.10. Parents should make contingency plans in the event of transport not turning up or where there are unavoidable delays.
- 9.11. If the adult learner attends a residential college and qualifies for travel assistance, this will only be provided at the start and end of each half-term or each week depending on the boarding arrangements. This will be made clear when the application is approved. We do not provide transport at other times or for parent/carer visits for meetings.

10. Appeal process

- 10.1. Applicants have the right to appeal if they disagree with the initial decision. The Council operates a two-stage appeal process.
- 10.2. Stage 1 appeal:
 - A stage 1 appeal form needs to be completed to make an appeal.

- All stage 1 appeals will be considered by the ISEND Travel Panel (“the Travel Panel”) which consists of senior officers from across the Council. The members of the Travel Panel will consider the appeal form; any information provided in support of the appeal; the application form; supporting information provided with the application; and any other correspondence used by the officer to reach a decision.
- The stage 1 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the young adult and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. The applicant will need to provide financial information on the appeal form if they want their financial circumstances to be considered, and if this detail has not already been provided in support of the application.
- In addition to completing a stage 1 appeal form it is possible to telephone one of our officers who will record your comments in writing and will pass this onto the panel members for their consideration.
- We shall aim to provide you with a decision from your stage 1 appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the application. You will receive an email with the detailed reasoning for the decision. We will also inform you how to escalate your appeal to the next stage if you disagree with the outcome.

10.3. Stage 2 appeal:

- A stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed to make a Stage 2 appeal.
- All stage 2 appeals will be considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel (“the Appeal Panel”). This is made up of three elected County Councillors who are independent of officers and the Stage 1 appeal process. The Appeal Panel will consider the original application and the appeal forms together with any supporting documents or information provided to ESCC in relation to the application or the appeal. The Appeal Panel will also consider all verbal information made by the learner/parent/carer (such as via phone calls) where it is provided before the deadline for the meeting. The Appeal Panel may have questions during a hearing and in that situation, they may ask for the supporting officer to seek clarification by making a telephone call to the learner/parent/carer.
- The stage 2 appeal will consider the financial circumstances of the young adult and potential impact of a declined application if relevant. If the appeal refers to financial hardship, and the financial information was not provided at an earlier stage, this needs to be completed on the Stage 2 appeal form.

- It is not usually possible for learners/parents/carers to attend Appeal Panel meetings in person. It may be possible to provide verbal representations at the meeting in exceptional circumstances where a learner/parent/carer would face significant disadvantage in making their appeal without this. Examples of significant disadvantage could include having a relevant disability such as severe dyslexia or a learning difficulty that makes written communication difficult and where it has not been possible to access support to set out in writing the reason for appeal. It is possible to request to make verbal representations on the Stage 2 appeal form and the request will be considered by the supporting officer. It is expected that the verbal representation will be made via a telephone call or video call for a fixed duration at the start of the Appeal Panel hearing.
- The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be informed of their decision with the detailed reasoning in writing. We will also inform you how to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if you consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there were any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.
- If the Appeal Panel is not satisfied it has enough information to reach a decision it may send a letter containing its provisional view on a stage 2 appeal and/or requesting further information. This is called a 'minded to' letter. Where necessary, this letter will be sent within 5 working days of the Appeal Panel meeting. A minded to letter is an opportunity for the appellant to comment on the Appeal Panel's provisional view of the stage 2 appeal, to answer any questions or points of clarification raised in the letter and to provide any further information requested. The letter will set out how long you have to respond to it, but this is usually 7 days. The Appeal Panel will then meet to finally determine your stage 2 appeal taking into account any response to its minded to letter.

10.4. More information about the appeals process, as well as the appeal forms can be found on the school transport appeals webpage:

<https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/transport/send-transport/travel-assistance-appeals/stage-1-appeals>

11. Review of travel provision

- 11.1. A new application must be made if the adult learner moves to a new home or the family's circumstances change.
- 11.2. Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in having to pay back for costs incurred by the Council.
- 11.3. The mode of travel assistance being offered will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the adult learner's needs and the most cost effective for the Council.

12. Vacant seat scheme

- 12.1. Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the Council, the adult learner/parent/carer may be able to apply for a vacant seat: This is only possible for some routes to colleges, and we can only give seats on our existing vehicles where there are spaces available and where the proposed addition does not negatively affect existing travellers or the safety of the vehicle. This means we are not able to offer a seat to everyone.
- 12.2. The charge for the 2023/24 school year is £188.70 per term based on a 6-term year or £1,132.20 per year (reviewed annually). It may be necessary for the adult learner to get themselves or be taken to an existing stop. If a change is made to the shared route which means that the cost of the vacant seat increases, this increase may be passed onto the adult learner, or the offer of the vacant seat withdrawn. We will have to withdraw the vacant seat offer if we need the seat for someone else who qualifies for free transport or if we no longer have anyone on the route that qualifies for free transport. ESCC will give as much notice as possible however the minimum notice given will be one week.
- 12.3. Further information is available on our website at: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel

13. Changes to this policy

- 13.1. If the Council makes any change to this policy which is assessed as likely to have an impact on current and prospective adult learners, the Council will inform the immediately affected adult learners at the earliest opportunity. Such changes may include, but are not limited to, changes required by the impact of further cost saving requirements placed upon the Council and further limitations on the support given.

14. Complaints

- 14.1. The Council is here to help and support the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.
- 14.2. Sometimes things go wrong, and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the Council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or impolitely. We cannot investigate matters that are subject to the two-stage appeals process.
- 14.3. Complaints regarding the service provided on a vehicle organised by the Council, or concerns about transport arrangements should be directed to:
Email: compliance.cts@eastsussex.gov.uk
or telephone 01273 335 577
- 14.4. Complaints can also be made to the Children's Services Customer Relations Team.
[Feedback and complaints about Children's Services | East Sussex County Council](#)
- 14.5. You can also submit your complaint by email CS.Customerrelations@eastsussex.gov.uk or by post to: East G, County Hall, Lewes, BN7 1UE.

15. Summary of the application process

15.1. A summary of the overall process follows:

1. Apply
 - a) Applicants should review our gateway criteria set out in section 3.1.
 - b) Use the online form to apply.
 - c) We can post you a paper form if you prefer.
2. Application considered
 - a) An officer will consider the application form and any supporting evidence.
 - b) We may contact you to find out more about the learner and their circumstances.
 - c) We aim to inform you of a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form, but some applications can take longer to process.
3. Decision
 - a) You will be informed in writing of the officer's decision.
4. Needs assessment
 - a) If the officer determines that transport is necessary, a needs assessment whilst travelling will be completed.
5. Organise transport
 - a) On completion of the needs assessment, it can take up to 15 working days for suitable transport to be organised.
 - b) Parent notified of the travel arrangements.
6. Stage 1 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the decision, you can request a Stage 1 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 1 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 1 appeals are considered by the ISEND Travel Panel who meet monthly to consider cases.
 - d) You should receive a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form.
7. Stage 2 appeal
 - a) If you disagree with the Stage 1 decision, you can request a Stage 2 appeal.
 - b) Complete a Stage 2 appeal form.
 - c) All Stage 2 appeals are considered by the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel.
 - d) The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application form.
 - e) You will receive a written decision from the Appeal Panel within 5 working days of the meeting.

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