

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.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

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### **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**

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

All

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

#### APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027