

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

**Date:** 3 December 2025

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

**Title of report:** School Organisation Plan 2025 to 2029

**Purpose of report:** To seek Lead Member approval to publish the School Organisation Plan 2025 to 2029

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to approve the School Organisation Plan 2025 to 2029 for publication.**

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**1. Background**

1.1 The Local Authority ('LA') has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand across East Sussex. In support of this duty, the LA publishes a School Organisation Plan ('the plan') annually. The plan sets out the projected demand for primary, secondary, and special educational needs places in the future. It also identifies where the LA expects 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 2024 to 2028, was approved for publication by the Lead Member on 9 December 2024. A new draft plan for 2025 to 2029, has been produced using the most recent set of pupil forecasts which take account of the latest information on births, GP registrations, parental preferences, housing developments, and migration patterns. The draft plan also includes new chapters on Alternative Provision (AP) and Post-16 provision. The draft plan is available at Appendix 1.

**2. East Sussex context**

2.1 The draft plan describes how births in the county have continued to decline since their peak of 5,500 in the 2010/11 academic year. Countywide births fell to below 4,300 in 2022/23. Based on historic patterns of 11-to-13-year cycles of peaks and troughs, birth numbers may soon begin to rise again. However, the declining fertility rates currently seen in East Sussex and nationally may mean that previous cyclical patterns are not repeated. Births in East Sussex for 2023/24 have increased by approximately 80 births when compared to the previous year. It remains to be seen whether this signifies the start of a prolonged recovery in the birth rate.

2.2 The decline in countywide birth rates is reflected in falling primary reception (Year R) intake numbers, a trend expected to continue until at least 2027/28. The latest pupil forecasts indicate a potential recovery in pupil numbers beyond this point. However, intake forecasts beyond 2028/29 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data, making them less certain. Even if birth rates follow typical cyclical patterns, it is unlikely that higher Year R intake numbers will be seen across the county before the 2030s.

2.3 Intakes to secondary schools in Year 7 peaked in 2022/23 and are now in decline.

2.4 In 2024/25, the number of school-aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an Education, Health and Care Plan ('EHCP') was 4,481. There were also 412 young people aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP who needed continued support to transition to adulthood. Over the next four years, the LA forecasts that the number of school-aged children with EHCPs will grow by around 22% to nearly 5,500.

2.5 To meet this growing demand, the LA's Special Educational Needs and Disability ('SEND') place planning strategy focuses on developing more specialist facilities in mainstream schools. This will help schools to be more inclusive and educate children alongside their peers in their local communities. In the

2024/25 academic year the LA invited schools to submit expressions of interest for new or expanded specialist facilities. To date, the LA has approved:

- Three new primary school facilities at:
  - Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School
  - Ocklynge Junior School
  - Chyngton School
- One new secondary school facility at:
  - Seaford Head School
- Two expanded secondary school facilities at:
  - Uckfield College
  - Heathfield Community College

2.6 Alongside the development of more specialist facility provision, the LA is also reorganising and expanding [Acre Wood Academy](#)'s Church Road premises. This will increase capacity for secondary age students and create a school run nursery.

2.7 The LA has also identified a need for more specialist post-16 provision including for learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities, and improved transition support for learners with SEND to progress onto Further Education ('FE') Colleges for Level 1 and Level 2 courses. The LA is exploring with special schools and post-16 providers how this provision will be delivered.

### **3. Stakeholder consultation**

3.1 The LA consulted on the draft plan with schools, academy trusts, the Diocese of Chichester and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton in Term 1 of the current academic year. By the end of the consultation period three responses had been received, from two primary schools and one special school. Respondents focused on the increasing pressures related to SEND provision.

### **4. Conclusions and reasons for recommendation**

4.1 In conclusion, the draft School Organisation Plan for the period 2025 to 2029 sets out how the LA seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary and special school places in the right locations to meet demand in accordance with its statutory duty.

4.2 The Lead Member is recommended to approve the School Organisation Plan 2025 to 2029 for publication.

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LOCAL MEMBERS  
All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS  
Consultation responses

APPENDICES  
Appendix 1 – Draft School Organisation Plan 2025 to 2029