

SECONDARY SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2016 – 2018

1. Executive Summary

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

2. Introduction

Background

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

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

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

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

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

Context

Key Responsibilities:

Councils are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity

and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area, promote diversity and increase parental choice.

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

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

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

Autonomous School System

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

Figure 1: Mainstream Secondary Establishments (February 2016)

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

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

The diversity of the school estate in Wolverhampton is expected to be further enhanced in September 2016 when an independent school in the City (The Royal School Wolverhampton) converts to Free School status and expands.

Legislation dictates that, when considering the establishment of a new school, Free School/Academy proposals should be considered in the first instance and that Academy Trusts can apply directly to the Secretary of State to make significant changes to individual establishments.

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

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

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

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

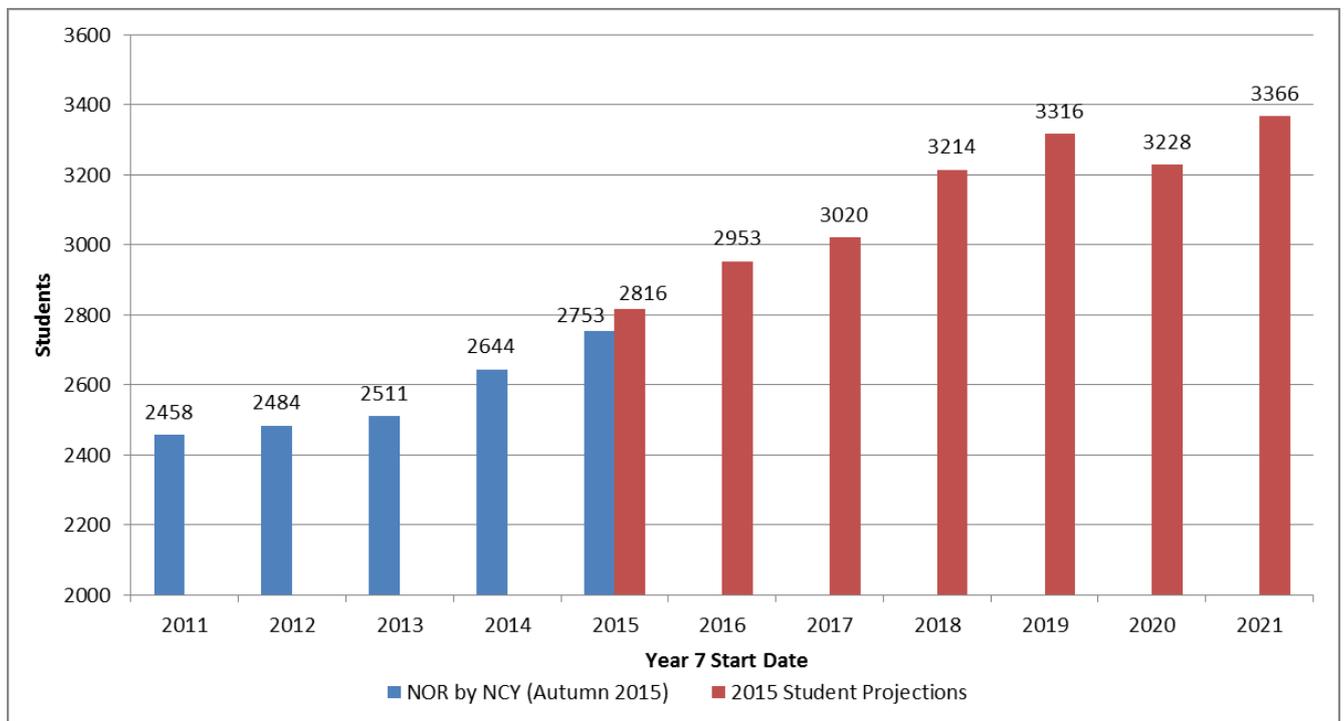
Demand

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

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

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

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



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

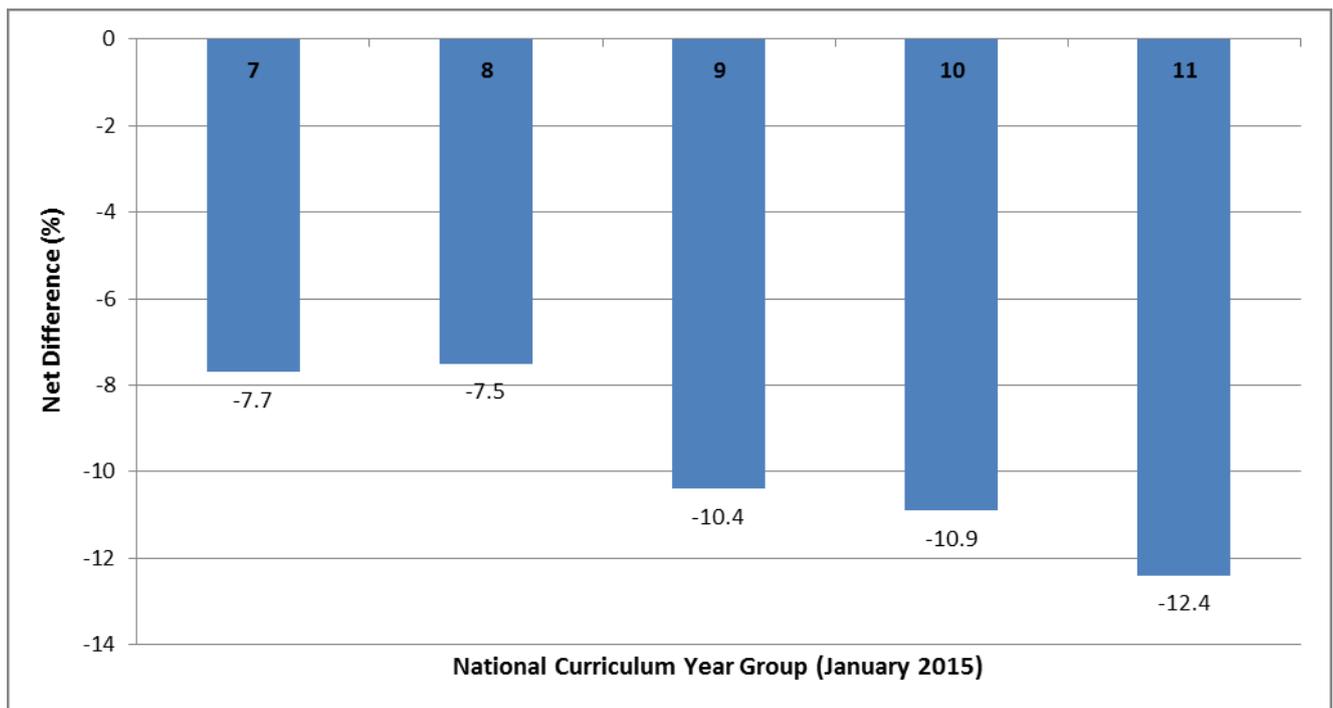
One of the key factors that influences demand for secondary school places in the City is the cross border movement of students. In January 2015, 1,116 secondary students who reside outside of Wolverhampton attended schools within the City (imports) and 2,501 secondary students who live in Wolverhampton attended schools outside of the City (exports). As

illustrated in Figure 3, in January 2015 Wolverhampton was a net exporter of students in Years 7 to 11.

It should be noted that the scale of net loss has changed significantly in recent years; in January 2015 the net difference between imports and exports as a percentage of the school population in Year 7 was -7.7% compared with -12.4% in Year 11. This change has been driven by both an increasing proportion of students residing outside of Wolverhampton attending a school in the City and a reduction in the proportion of students residing in Wolverhampton attending provision outside of the City.

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

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



3. Secondary School Organisation

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

School Size

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

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

Surplus Place Position

Surplus places are school places that have not been filled.

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

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

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

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

The Introduction of Additional School Places

In order to safeguard the sustainability of the school estate, the expansion of existing schools will be investigated in the first instance, prior to considering the introduction of new provision. In order to achieve this ambition, the Council will seek to maximise the capacity

of existing school sites and consider the appropriation of suitable land adjacent to existing school sites.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When an expanding school is in the process of converting to academy status, the Council will seek to ensure that legal mechanisms are employed to ensure that the needs of the City are fulfilled and any approved investment is secured for the future. Specifically the Council's legal representatives will seek to include reference to the enlarged capacity within

relevant Commercial Transfer Agreements and representations will be made to the DfE to request that Funding Agreements reflect the capacity post-expansion.

The Introduction of Additional Capacity into Existing Cohorts

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

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

All-through Schools

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

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

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

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

Temporary Accommodation

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

Discontinuance of Maintained Provision

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

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

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

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

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

Intervention

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

Post-16 Provision

Recent central government initiatives including raising the participation age, the introduction of Post-16 Study Programmes and apprenticeship delivery require extensive partnership

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

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

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

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

Specialist Provision

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

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

Change Management

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

Estate Management

It is recommended that a long term approach is taken to the management of educational assets in order to ensure that fluctuations in demand can be effectively and efficiently catered for. Where appropriate, sites should be reserved as contingency to cater for anticipated increases in demand, such as that resulting from new housing developments.

However, it should be recognised that adopting a longer term approach will result in short-term budgetary pressures as sites must be secured and maintained.

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

Other Considerations

This strategy requires that when considering secondary school organisation:

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

Strategy Review

The Strategy is subject to review on a biennial basis.

