

<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>8 JULY 2015</b>
<b>SCHOOL EXPANSION PROGRAMME &amp; ADMISSIONS IN NOTTINGHAM</b>
<b>REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To scrutinise the management of the school organisation programme in the City of Nottingham, including the availability of school places.
- 1.2 To ensure that the school organisation programme is being developed and delivered appropriately to meet the demand for school places in the city.

**2. Action required**

The Committee is asked to

- 2.1 consider the programme of school expansion in the city and how the Council will manage the changes faced in Nottingham;
- 2.2 consider the pressure on school places in the city and the programme in place to manage this; and
- 2.3 use the information received at the meeting to inform scrutiny of the school expansion programme; and
- 2.4 identify any relevant recommendations for improvements and any potential areas for further scrutiny activity for inclusion in the work programme.

**3. Background information**

- 3.1 Local authorities are statutorily responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient schools, and therefore school places, in their area. Local authorities carry out an assessment of demographic changes and then plan and finance new school places. Financing includes the use of funding provided by the Department for Education (DfE). In many cases, there will be a range of possible solutions to providing new school places, ranging from building new schools, permanent or temporary school extensions to converting existing space within schools for use as classrooms.
- 3.2 Local authorities rely on the co-operation of individual schools to expand existing provision to meet demand, although space on existing school sites might limit this, as well as the legal limits on the size of certain primary classes.

- 3.3 The impact of rising school-age children is an important issue locally, carrying significant financial implications. The number of pupils on roll in Nottingham schools has increased steadily since 2011 as follows:

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
<b>Primary Schools Total</b>	14045	16381	17694	19896	21113
<b>Secondary School Total</b>	2015	3259	4330	6194	9580
<b>Academies Total</b>	25199	20094	16663	12163	6853
<b>Special Schools Total</b>	363	338.5	329.5	317	316
<b>City of Nottingham All Schools Total</b>	41622	40072	39016	38570	37862

City Census profiles – January 2015 data

- 3.4 As identified above, the national demand for school places is rising and this increase is mirrored locally. The actual number of primary school-age children nationally is projected to rise from a low point of 3.95 million in 2009 to 4.51 million by 2018.
- 3.5 Since 2010, Nottingham City Council has been implementing an extensive school expansion programme to add primary school places in the areas of most need, following a local population increase. As areas of need have been identified, bids have been submitted to the DfE for funding to expand schools, in some cases by an extra 420 school places.

#### School admissions – local context

- 3.6 Nottingham City has been experiencing pressure for primary school places due to the increase in the number of children in the city requiring a school place, similar to other major cities in the UK. More families in Nottingham are having more children and wanting to access city schools and the population in the city is at the highest level since the 1970s. In the last two years Nottingham City has added extra places to try address the issue, but the issue is so significant that central government has recently announced a programme to provide additional funding to local authorities to provide more places.
- 3.7 As a result of this pressure on primary school places there has been an increase in the number of parents/carers being unable to secure a place for their children at their school of first preference and a number of families with more than one child having to take their children to more than one school.
- 3.8 In response Nottingham City Council has prioritised the expansion of city schools where possible. A recent example of this programme is the Executive Board approved the expansion of Heathfield Primary School from a 280 place school to a 700 place school from September 2015.<sup>1</sup> Following a successful bid to the DfE in 2013, the Council co-ordinated a

<sup>1</sup> Executive Board, March 2014

four week consultation period, including feedback from parents and carers of children at the school and local community members. The engagement process with the school and local community included hanging statutory notices on the gates of the school building, as well as being circulated in the Topper newspaper.

3.9 Between 2001 and 2011, live births rose nationally by 22% to 688,000 and the number of children starting in reception classes in primary school increased by 16% to 606,000. Previously, many local authorities were faced with falling school numbers and had reduced primary places by 5% nationally between 2003/4 and 2009/10. In May 2012, nationally 20.4% of primary schools were fully subscribed or at over capacity. The number of children in infant classes (up to age 7) of 31 or more pupils doubled in the five year period, from 23,200 in 2007 to 47,300 in 2012.

3.10 Population projections for Nottingham (figures in thousands to one decimal place):

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All ages	309	310	312	314	316	317	319
0-4	20	21	21	21	21	21	21
5-9	17	18	18	19	19	19	19
10-14	16	15	15	15	16	16	17

Office for National Statistics

3.11 In September 2014, the Council adopted the Nottingham City Aligned Core Strategy, which set out the Council's strategic planning policies and its development principles. This includes the broad scale and location of housing projected up to 2028 and includes proposals to build 5,020 new homes in the period 2015-2020. This could add to the rising demand for school places in Nottingham.

#### School appeals – local context

3.12 As has always been the case there are a number of schools within the city which are more popular than others, which results in them being over-subscribed. In some cases this will result in a parent/carers' child not being offered a place at their school of first preference. A response to this situation might be to exercise their right of appeal.

3.13 The admissions appeals process exists to ensure that parents and children have the opportunity to make an appeal for a place and to have it heard fairly and impartially. The admission authority has to give parents at least 10 school days' notice before the hearing to confirm the date. Appeals have to be heard within 40 school days of the appeal deadline. This right of appeal is to a panel made up of members of the public who are independent of the local authority.

3.14 The general aims of the appeal hearing are:

- to allow the school to demonstrate how the admission of another child would ‘prejudice’ (or prevent) the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources for other pupils; and
- to allow the parents an opportunity to explain why their child’s needs and circumstances might outweigh the school’s case.

3.15 Places in Key Stage 1, which includes reception and Years 1 and 2, are covered by what is known as Infant Class Size Legislation. In practice, this means that apart from a few limited exceptions, it is against the law for children to be taught in classes of more than 30, unless there is more than one school teacher present. This will mean that if a child’s preferred school is operating under Infant Class Size Legislation, there are only limited grounds on which an appeal can be successful.

3.16 The table below highlights the total number of primary and secondary appeals received by Nottingham City Council from 2005/6 to date.

05/06	06/7	07/8	08/9	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
89	266	284	533	464	454	598	527	694	641	150*

\*The number of appeals received as of 12/06/2015

3.17 The growth in the pressure on school places is potentially reflected in the recorded growth in the number of appeals received. It does also potentially reflect the overall growth in the number of applicants for school places overall.

#### School appeals - national context

3.18 For the 2013/14 academic year, there were 1,443,870 admissions in England and 50,550 appeals lodged, of which 13,785 related to academies and free schools.<sup>2</sup> Projections for the number of pupils in all state funded schools show there will be close to 1 million additional pupils between 2013 and 2021, an increase of just over 13%.<sup>3</sup>

3.19 Further analysis of DfE figures by the Local Government Association suggests that as many as two in three councils in England could see more children looking to start primary school than they have places for by September 2016.<sup>4</sup>

3.20 The Committee is asked to scrutinise the management of the school organisation programme in the City of Nottingham and to ensure that it is being developed and delivered appropriately to meet the demand for school places in the city.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education Admissions Appeals Statistics: figures based on appeals lodged by 1 September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education: National Pupil projections – future trends in pupil numbers – March 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Local Government Association: Councils warn of rising demand for primary school places: September 2013.

**4. List of attached information**

None.

**5. Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information**

None.

**6. Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

- 6.1 Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough and Nottingham City Aligned Core Strategy Adoption, Sept 2014  
<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/Localplan>
- 6.2 Nottingham Insight Census profiles  
<http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk>
- 6.3 Office for National Statistics  
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Population+Change>
- 6.4 School admission appeals: are parents being heard? Local Government Ombudsman
- 6.5 Department for Education Admissions Appeals statistics  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/admissions-appeals-in-england-academic-year-2013-to-2014>
- 6.6 Department for Education: National Pupil projections: future trends in pupil numbers – March 2013  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/admissions-appeals-in-england-academic-year-2013-to-2014>
- 6.7 Local Government Association: Councils warn of rising demand for primary school places: September 2013  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/5416718/NEWS](http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/5416718/NEWS)

**7. Wards affected**

Citywide.

**8. Contact information**

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