

Bristol City Council

School Organisation Strategy 2025 – 2028

Education & Skills

Contents

Bristol City Council School Organisation Strategy 2025 – 2028 Education & Skills	1
Section 1: Introduction.....	2
Section 2: Our Priorities and Plan.....	3
Priorities.....	3
Objectives.....	3
Section 3: Key Terms Explained	4
Admission Authorities.....	5
Type of School.....	5
Who is the admission authority?	5
Admissions Arrangements and Published Admission Numbers (PAN)	5
Section 4: Early Years	5
Why is Early Years a Priority?	5
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	6
Section 5: Primary	7
Why is Primary a Priority?.....	7
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	7
Section 6: Secondary	8
Why is Secondary a Priority?	8
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	9
Section 7: Post 16	9
Why is Post 16 a Priority?	9
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	10
Section 8: Special Educational Needs and/or Disability	11
Why is SEND a Priority?	11
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	13
Section 9: Strategic Approach to Pupil Place Planning	13
9.1 In-Year Admissions, Working PANs and Teaching Group Structure.....	16

Section 1: Introduction

This School Organisation Strategy is delivered in conjunction with a supporting Evidence Summary document. Ensuring the sufficiency of mainstream and specialist school places is a statutory duty for all local authorities (Education Act 1996, Section 14). This School Organisation Strategy sets out how Bristol City Council will deliver sufficient school places in the context of these statutory duties and in line with the [Corporate Strategy 2025 – 2030](#) objective to improve equity in educational outcomes and break the link between deprivation and poorer results. It provides key partners with trends and data to inform their future decision-making and an important framework for effective planning within the context of Bristol. Effective pupil place planning is a fundamental element of the Local Authority's (LA's) role as strategic commissioner of good school places. It is under-pinned by the use of local area knowledge and data to identify any early warning signs of insufficient numbers of school places in specific parts of the authority, or where there may be too many places that impacts on the efficient use of resources. In the context of an increasing number of schools becoming academies, the Local Authority must work with system partners including Trusts and Diocesan Boards to develop a strategic approach in response to the sufficiency of school places.

Our last Integrated Education and Capital Strategy was written in 2015 with a focus in the primary sector to ensure sufficiency of places due to a significant rise in births between 2005 and 2012. Prior to this, the 2013 School Organisation Strategy (SOS) outlined plans to increase primary places through 54 projects (including three new schools) at a cost of £203.4M, and the 2015 Integrated Education and Capital Strategy committed to increasing secondary mainstream places, by up to 18 forms of entry, across the city to meet statutory requirements. Whilst these projects have faced multiple scheduling delays and cost increases, these projects are in delivery and have eased pressures on pupil place planning.

This School Organisation Strategy considers needs across all educational phases—from Early Years to Post-16 and specialist education, while aligning with statutory responsibilities and strategic partnerships. The key aims of this strategy are:

- To review school places in light of falling pupil numbers, particularly in primary education, and reduce surplus capacity by at least 50% from the academic year 2027/28 Engagement and collaboration regarding primary PAN reductions will take place from June 2025.
- Continued efforts to secure sufficiency in Early Years provision amid government policy changes and increased entitlements.
- Strategic planning to accommodate fluctuating secondary and post 16 demand through capital projects and partnerships with academy trusts.
- Expansion and adjustment of specialist provision to meet the growing demand for Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) support.

- A recognition of the impact of socio-economic inequality, population mobility, and sanctuary-seeking children on planning decisions.

This strategy reinforces the importance of collaboration across schools, trusts, local authorities, and communities to ensure that educational infrastructure in Bristol is responsive, equitable, and sustainable.

Bristol is experiencing a declining birth rate alongside changes in patterns of migration and an ongoing shortage of affordable family housing, resulting in a decrease in the number of young people living and going to school in Bristol. This impacts on the school population and the number of places the Local Authority need to plan for. An oversupply of places at a school can lead to financial and organisational inefficiency, sometimes resulting in school closure. This can be challenging for individual schools to manage, meaning young people do not get the level of education they deserve. However, changing teachers, friendship groups, and travel arrangements can be deeply unsettling. Bristol City Council listen to children's voices and protect their rights not only to a quality education, but a community where they feel they belong. Not all vacant places are surplus; it is reasonable for a Local Authority to have 5-10% vacant school places for operational flexibility and providing families with some choice of school. Effective pupil place planning is essential to ensure there are efficient, high-quality places to meet demand in Bristol in a way that works for schools and families.

Section 2: Our Priorities and Plan

This School Organisation Strategy sets out a clear and evidence-based approach to shaping Bristol's educational landscape over the next three years. By proactively reviewing surplus capacity across all phases of education, the strategy ensures the needs of communities in Bristol will be met while maintaining a commitment to high standards, inclusion, and equity for all children and young people.

Priorities	Objectives
<u>Early Years</u>	• Ensure Sufficient and Accessible Childcare. Prepare for the phased national rollout of 30 hours of free early education and childcare for working parents of children from 9 months to school age by September 2025. • Sustain and Improve High-Quality Provision. Continue partnership working with the maintained, private, voluntary, and independent sectors. • Expand Support for Disadvantaged Children. Target wards with highest need to ensure funding is directed where it will have the

	greatest impact. Address critical gaps in wards with no or very limited places.
<u>Primary</u>	• Address the oversufficiency of primary school places and monitor and support undersubscribed primary schools. Help schools consider reducing Published Admission Numbers (PAN) where appropriate. • Preserve viability of small schools. Identify and support smaller schools at risk of becoming economically unviable due to declining pupil numbers. • Preserve parental preference as much as possible during the process to ensure family needs and choices are respected.
<u>Secondary</u>	• Manage fluctuating demand. Strategic forecasting and planning will address declining pupil numbers while ensuring capacity remains sufficient. Maintain strong partnerships with schools to manage sufficiency and explore more sustainable long-term solutions. • Ensure efficient use of high-quality facilities to maximise long-term value and support student learning. • Continue to improve parental choice and satisfaction through fair admissions and better place planning.
<u>Post 16</u>	• Address creasing pupils becoming NEET driven by complex factors. • Close sufficiency gaps in Entry Level and Level 1 provision, especially in high-need areas with smaller classes, enhanced support, and focus on core skills (English and Maths). • Strengthen targeted, person-centred support services including employability skills, work experience, and pathways to further learning or employment. • Plan for capacity increases post-2029 to manage the forecasted rise in Year 11 pupils transitioning to post-16 education.
<u>SEND</u>	• Expanding local provision to increase capacity at Bristol Special Schools wherever possible. • Focus on early identification and support for SEND in early years. • Establish a system to regularly review the strategy's effectiveness and adapt to changing needs. • Collaborate with Bristol Parent Carers, The Listening Partnership, and other local organisations to co-produce solutions.

Section 3: Key Terms Explained

Admission Authorities

Admission authorities set the admissions policy and criteria for which new pupils are admitted to a maintained school or academy.

Each year admission authorities can review and amend their admissions arrangements. This must be completed in advance of the next admissions round.

The table below sets out the admission authority for each type of school in England. The Local Authority cannot determine the admissions arrangements for an academy, foundation or voluntary aided school.

Type of School	Who is the admission authority?
Academies	Academy Trust
Foundation Schools	Governing body
Voluntary Aided Schools (VA)	Governing body
Community Schools	Local Authority (LA)
Voluntary Controlled Schools (VC)	Local Authority (LA)

Admissions Arrangements and Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

Every primary and secondary school in England is required by law to have a published document outlining the overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used in deciding the allocation of school places, including any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered. This includes the minimum number of places the school has agreed to accept for each relevant year called the Published Admission Number (the PAN). For example, a 1 form entry school would have a PAN of 30 meaning they will accept up to 30 offers for school places in bulk intake years.

It is the responsibility of the admission authority to determine and apply the school's admissions arrangements and to ensure that processes are compliant with the [School Admissions Code \(SAC\)](#).

Section 4: Early Years

Why is Early Years a Priority?

The Childcare Act [2006](#) (sections 7, 12 and 13) and [2016](#) (sections 1 and 2) place a duty on every Local Authority to 'secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)'. Under these duties, Bristol City Council is required to undertake an annual childcare assessment and report this to Council Members to demonstrate that the duty is being met.

Looking ahead, the landscape for early education and childcare is changing, following the Government announcement to expand and phase in 30 hours of early education and childcare for working families with younger children. By September 2025, working families with children from 9 months to school age will be entitled to 30 hours of early education and childcare support. The changes are being introduced incrementally.

The delivery of Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) through childcare providers to families in Bristol is governed by statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and covers these main areas:

- 30-hour entitlement for working parents of under 2-year-olds (from **September 24**)
- 30-hour entitlement for working parents of 2-year-olds (from **September 24**)
- 15-hour entitlement for Eligible 2-year-olds (from **April 2024**)
- 15-hour entitlement for parents of 3 and 4-year-olds (the Universal Free Hours)
- 30-hour entitlement for working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds (previously known as the Extended Free Hours)

Therefore, from **September 2025** working parents of children under the age of five will be entitled to 30 hours of early education and childcare a week.

Bristol was sufficient for childcare places for all ages on a citywide basis in 2024, but there was less than desired sufficiency for Under 2s places, knowing that the expansion of childcare was impending in September 2025. Over 200 places for babies were created with the allocation of £650K of capital grant funding needed for September 2025 and a further £723K of Expansion Grant funding has been awarded for 2025/2026 to ensure that the supply meets the demand.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Invest capital funding in the expansion of places for Under 2s, prioritising the wards with the lowest sufficiency.
- Maximise the hourly base rate as far as is practical to ensure good take up of the offer by registered providers.
- Incentivise providers to keep places open for Eligible 2-year-olds by introducing a higher hourly base rate in 2025/2026.
- Promote expansion in those wards with the lowest sufficiency.

Section 5: Primary

Why is Primary a Priority?

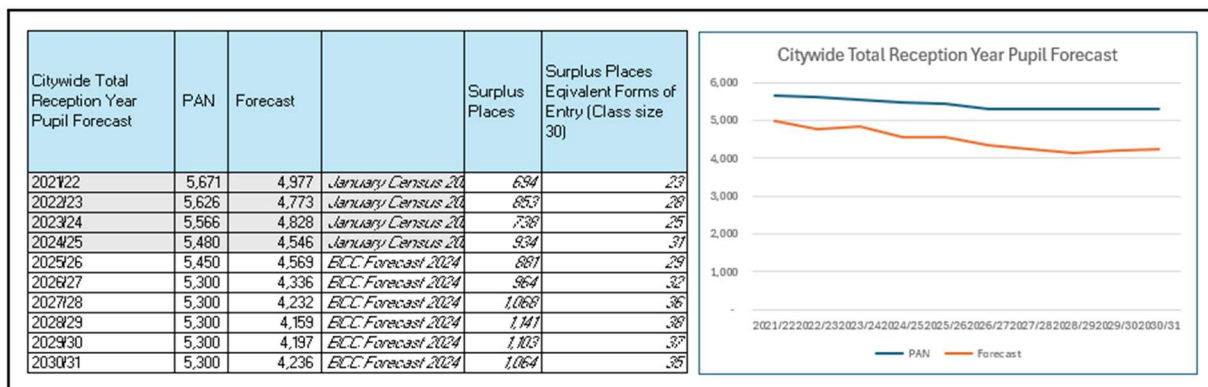
Surging birth rates and increased inward migration peaked in the academic year 2011/2012 and placed huge pressures on primary school place planning across the UK. Bristol City Council and its partners responded by increasing school places significantly between 2005 and 2012 to meet the increasing demand in the city. However, since September 2016, Bristol, like other cities in England has started to see birth rates fall, and the impact of issues such as the cost of living and the COVID pandemic has reduced inward migration figures, in addition to a low pupil yield from family housing. The combination of these events has resulted in an oversufficiency of primary school places in Bristol. In 2025, 65 out of 98 primary schools with admission from Reception are undersubscribed, while 33 schools received offers up to their Published Admissions Number (PAN). Bristol currently has 27 maintained schools where the Local Authority is the admission authority.

As of 2025, Bristol has 33 schools with a 1FE (30 pupils per form) intake in Reception, leaving no room for further PAN reductions in these schools. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places but faces limitations in influencing admissions decisions for schools outside of its direct control.

Current birth rate projections indicate that the next five years will continue to see a reduction in the number of Reception year children requiring school places. This has left some smaller schools vulnerable. Schools with intakes of 30 or 60 Reception year pupils face the possibility of becoming economically unviable. School closures must be a last resort, but in some cases this decision will be unavoidable. For communities, the closure of a local school and loss of these facilities can have a long-lasting negative impact. Children may have to travel further from home, impacting on their sense of belonging to their local community and wellbeing.

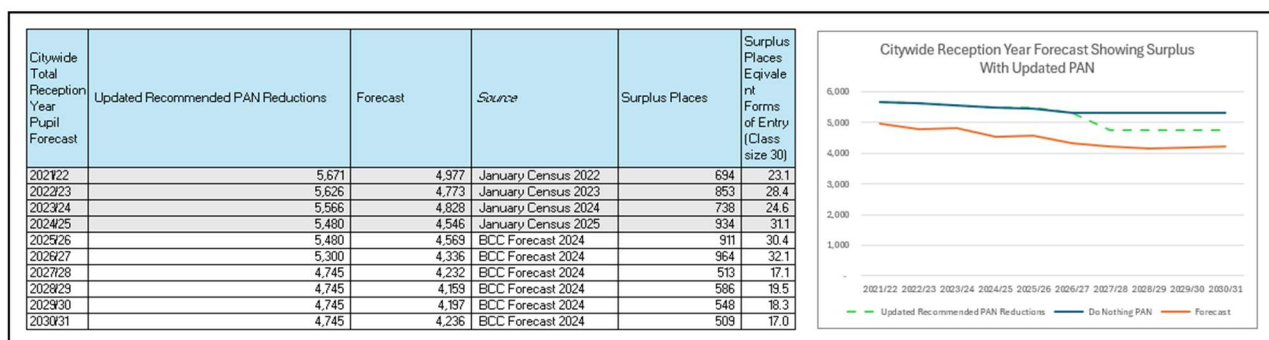
Recommendations and Next Steps

The table below demonstrates the projected number of surplus school places in Reception classes if the Local Authority were to take no action. By 2030, the city would have a potential surplus of 37 forms of entry in Reception. This would be financially unviable for a considerable number of schools.



Our analysis highlights a recommended reduction in primary PAN of 18.5 forms of entry across the city. This equates to 555 primary school places. The Local Authority will take account of the most recent Ofsted reviews when considering reductions in PAN. This is subject to change in light of circumstantial requirements such as school closures. Many of these proposals would be in areas where schools have, according to historical admission and Number on Roll (NOR) data, been under-subscribed by 0.5 to 1 form of entry. Therefore, reflecting parental preference and general reductions in demand.

The graph below illustrates the substantial effect these reductions would have on the surplus citywide places. Having reviewed the area-based forecast data, maintaining a collaborative approach in working with Bristol's schools and Trusts, the overall surplus could be reduced by 50% whilst maintaining suitable provision and preference for local families.



Section 6: Secondary

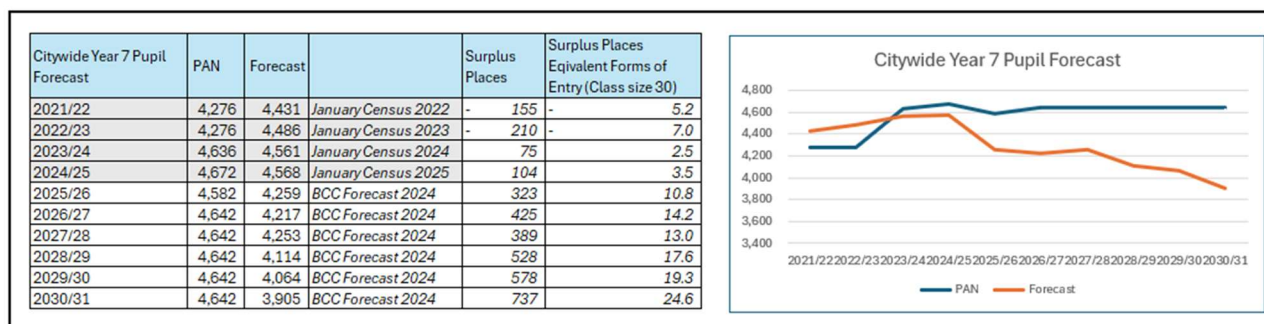
Why is Secondary a Priority?

Bristol's 2015 - 2018 Integrated Education and Capital Strategy predicted a peak in Year 7 school applications in 2023. To address these pressures, the strategy outlined plans to build three new secondary schools in Bristol to manage student numbers as they moved through primary into secondary provision. Two of these projects have faced delays creating significant shortages in Year 7 school places for September 2022. Oasis Daventry Road and Oasis Temple Quarter opened in temporary accommodation from September 2023, which has helped ease pressure for secondary school places.

The academic year 2024/2025 saw the demand for Year 7 secondary school places peak at 4,635. Applications for Year 7 places for September 2025 fell and it is predicted that secondary school demand will continue to fall. To meet the demand for places, some of Bristol's secondary schools have allowed offers above PAN, and some have taken bulge classes for several years. Through this mechanism, as well as increased capacity through capital projects and the opening of Trinity Academy, Oasis Temple Quarter and Oasis Daventry Road, Bristol has been successful in meeting its statutory duty of offering a Year 7 place to every child in need of one.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The table below demonstrates the projected number of surplus school places in Year 7 classes if the Local Authority were to take no action. By 2030, the city would have a potential surplus of 25 forms of entry in Year 7.



Over the next 3 years, the Local Authority will ensure there are sufficient Year 7 places in the city for every child who requires one. Some schools have allowed the allocation of places above their PAN, and it is expected that this will not be required going forward. The Local Authority is not recommending any reductions in PAN currently. This will be reviewed in the next strategy update (September 2028) when demand will have fallen, and parental preference will be considered. Bristol City Council is not the admission authority for any secondary school in the city, however, will take a collaborative and proactive approach to planning an appropriate response to the surplus of secondary school places.

Section 7: Post 16

Why is Post 16 a Priority?

The [Participation of young people in education, employment or training, statutory guidance for local authorities \(2024, Department for Education\)](#), sets out the Local Authority's statutory duties. Whilst the department provides the framework to increase participation and reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), responsibility and accountability lies with local authorities. Local authorities have a critical role to play in supporting young people to access education and training – and therefore in understanding the characteristics and current

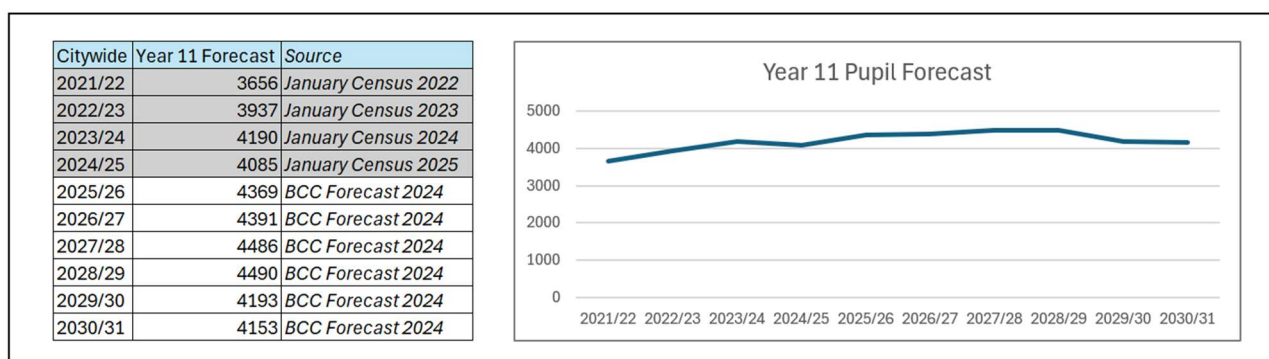
activity of the young people in their area. The Local Authority's duties include securing enough suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 or over and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained. This is a duty under [section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996](#). To fulfil this, local authorities should have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and identify and resolve gaps in provision. The Local Authority must also make available to all young people aged 13-19, and to those between 20 and 25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND), support it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist them to effectively participate in education or training.

As of May 2025, there are 905 young people who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) and 605 young people who are NEET in Bristol. This trend is influenced by a range of complex and interrelated factors, including mental health challenges, inappropriate course selection, exclusions and suspensions, often linked to poor attendance or incomplete coursework, as well as a shift in preference towards direct employment. A significant sufficiency gap has been identified in Post 16 provision across the city, particularly in relation to Entry Level and Level 1 courses. In September 2024, both City of Bristol College (CoBC) and South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS) reported operating at full capacity.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Early identification of individual needs and potential barriers to engagement.
- Consideration of social and emotional factors, including the impact of reduced peer support.
- Enhanced collaboration between schools, colleges, and Local Authority services.
- Provision of person-centred support plans that ensure continuity of care and learning.
- A review of Post 16 sufficiency, targeting an increase in Entry Level and Level 1 provision in high-need areas and programmes that integrate life skills with vocational learning.

The Year 11 pupil forecast below highlights the bulge of secondary students transitioning into post 16 education. This implies the Local Authority will need to consider increases in capacity to accommodate a projected peak in demand from 2029/30.

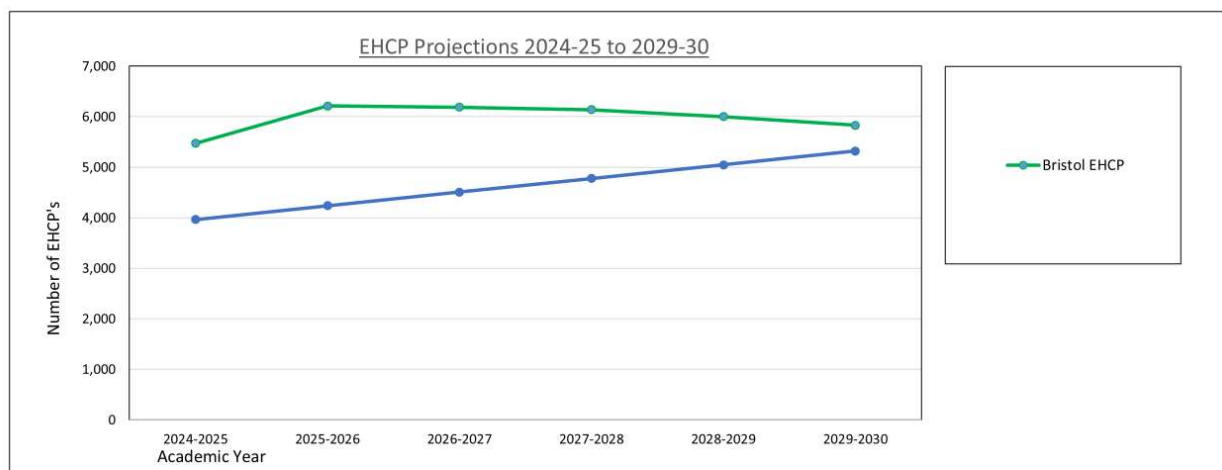


Section 8: Special Educational Needs and/or Disability

Why is SEND a Priority?

The [Bristol SEND \(Special Educational Needs and/or Disability\) and Inclusion Strategy 2024 - 2028](#) has now been published which sets out how the Council will deliver six key priorities, that will ensure the best possible provision for children and young people. Bristol City Council is committed to supporting children and young people to access the best education to meet their needs and to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. Having the right educational placement is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood.

There are over 13,000 children and young people living in Bristol with SEND. All children and young people with SEND have a barrier to learning which means they need additional support in an educational setting to ensure they can fully participate in and benefit from their education. Children and young people do not need to have a diagnosis to be identified as having a special educational need. There has been a significant increase in demand for SEND services at a national and local level. As of 2024, 70,635 children and young people are on roll in Bristol schools, 15.6% (10,944) receive SEND support and 4.1% (2,877) have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The number of children and young people with an EHCP in Bristol increased by 18% between 2023 and 2024, compared to an increase of 11% nationally. Speech language and communication needs is the most common type of SEND in Bristol. This includes children and young people who are awaiting an autism assessment. For pupils with an EHCP, Autism Spectrum Condition is the most common identified primary need followed by Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs.



** Please note that from years 2024-25 to 2029-30 for all categories excluding Bristol EHCP this has been calculated using a forecast formula which is based on a linear trend from previous years 2018 to 2024

	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030
Bristol EHCP	5,472	6,212	6,187	6,137	6,001	5,830
National Average	3,966	4,237	4,508	4,779	5,049	5,320

Nationally the percentage of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has continued to increase. There was a 10.2% increase between 2020 and 2024. Bristol numbers have followed this pattern, however between 2024 and 2025 these numbers have shown a spike which reflects the removal of non-statutory top up funding and can be seen in the table above. It is anticipated, with mitigations, the number of EHCPs in Bristol will start to align with National averages over the next five years. The table below shows a breakdown by type of provision attended, including projections to 2030. These numbers have been taken from a snapshot analysis of children and young people as of April 2025.

	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030
Mainstream	2672	3268	3274	3222	3055	2876
Early Years	21	21	21	21	21	21
Special Schools	1495	1580	1583	1588	1583	1539
INMS's	309	335	333	330	322	316
Resource Bases or SEN Units	362	436	439	443	445	448
Hospital Schools or AP	131	147	147	146	139	136
EOTAS	79	86	86	86	84	85
Post 16 & FE	768	702	667	664	711	759
	5837	6575	6550	6500	6360	6180

The table below shows the number of pupils with EHCPs by phase of education. The data demonstrates that there will be a potential increase in young people with EHCPs in phases post 16 and post-19 over the next 5 years. Future planning will need to take this into account.

TOTAL						
Primary Need	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030
Early Years	269	289	258	272	286	308
Primary	1848	2062	1791	1550	1277	1085
Secondary	2314	2497	2371	2248	2112	1960
Post 16-18	976	1130	1297	1337	1378	1322
Post 19-25	430	597	833	1093	1307	1505
Grand Total	5837	6575	6550	6500	6360	6180

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Provide the right support, at the right time, in the right place for children and young people with SEND.
- Expand local SEND provision to meet the growing demand and reduce reliance on out-of-area placements.
- Promote inclusivity by strengthening mainstream schools' capacity to support children with SEND.
- Collaborate with families, schools, and health services to co-produce decisions and strategies.
- Prepare children and young people with SEND for successful transitions into adulthood.

Section 9: Strategic Approach to Pupil Place Planning

The duty to ensure sufficient school provision by commissioning additional places when required is delivered either through permanent expansions or via new schools, with places made available in the right place at the right time. The duty also requires local authorities to manage and reduce surplus school places where they are no longer required.

Whilst it is important to ensure there is not over-provision of school places; local authorities are expected to retain a degree of unfilled places to be able to operate their admissions processes effectively. For example, to offer places to children whose families move in-year.

Our strategic approach to delivering effective pupil place planning over the next three years is detailed below. This approach will be adopted between the academic years 2025/26 and 2027/28, and an updated strategy will be published in 2028.

- **Plan a strategic and adaptive approach for reducing surplus capacity to address the over-provision of primary school places in the city.**

Implementing an adaptive PAN reduction strategy allows for flexibility, enabling Bristol to adapt more seamlessly to fluctuating demand across different educational phases as population and enrolment trends evolve over time. In accordance with the School Admissions Code (SAC) and the statutory responsibilities of both the school's admission authority and the Local Authority (LA), school places must be offered up to the Published Admission Number (PAN) as stated in the school's admission arrangements. Neither the school nor the Local Authority can refuse a preference-based application if the total number of applications falls below the PAN. Bristol School Admissions and Pupil Place Planning teams support schools in managing both current and historical surplus places by fostering effective communication with school leadership. This collaboration enables the Local Authority to gain a clear understanding of the school's structure and operational context, ensuring that staffing and resources are managed effectively during periods of low application numbers. This approach also allows the School Admissions team to manage non-preference or referral-based offers, to strategically 'top up' under-subscribed schools, or to informally 'cap' a PAN where schools seek to maintain a roll lower than their published number, to remain within manageable limits.

The Local Authority will provide support with sharing data, explaining the admissions and consultation processes, and encouraging collaborative frameworks for improved engagement amongst organisations. A geographically targeted approach will be taken to ensure surplus school places are addressed where issues are most prevalent. The Local Authority will use statistical models incorporating demographic trends, historical data, and geographic data to inform projections and decisions. The Local Authority will adhere to statutory consultation and legal frameworks, ensuring that any changes to PAN are transparent, fair, and meet the needs of the communities. Where necessary, mergers or partnerships between schools can be considered.

- **Implement a collaborative, area-based approach working with school leaders, focusing on regions with particularly high numbers of surplus places and where smaller schools are at the greatest risk.**

The Local Authority will continue to organise area-specific meetings with schools in regions facing the most immediate issues and organise engagement opportunities with all relevant

school leaders. The council will facilitate collaborative discussions to identify actions and improvements. Over the next three years, the Local Authority will provide a platform for schools to discuss their concerns regarding Number on Roll (NOR) and falling numbers of enrolments, leading to decisions about changes that benefit schools, local families, and communities. This collaborative approach to resolving school place planning issues will ensure the best outcomes for all stakeholders.

- **Preserve parental preference as much as possible during the process to ensure family needs and choices are respected.**

The Local Authority will strive to take account of parental preference when making decisions and factors that influence a school's success. Schools within the identified regions of the area-specific PAN reduction plan will work with the Local Authority to develop localised strategies while considering community impact and family preferences.

- **Support smaller primary schools by managing enrolment pressures effectively**

Larger schools will be encouraged to reduce PAN, especially those who are under subscribed as well as those that dominate in areas where smaller schools are finding it difficult to attract pupils. Reduction of PAN in larger settings may result in more schools becoming oversubscribed. This means that smaller schools at risk of closure due to low enrolments will benefit from implementation of second and third preference offers, where first preference offers can no longer be met. The city's primary schools will have a more balanced supply of places, ensuring that schools remain open and viable, and that education provision remains high-quality.

- **Explore future uses for vacant school capacity in repurposing spaces for educational initiatives, such as early years, SEND support, post 16 or other intervention programmes.**

The Local Authority will work collaboratively in assessing how any surplus school estate can be repurposed for other educational needs, including early years provision, SEND provision or intervention programmes, maximising their use. Mothballing unused spaces will also be considered, as well as closures only where absolutely necessary, but keeping current education assets in use for educational purposes in the future.

- **Prepare for a similar future review of secondary school and post 16 provision as reduced demand for primary places moves through to secondary and post 16 places.**

The framework established for primary schools will inform future planning efforts as reduced demand begins to affect secondary school places and post 16 provision. The Local Authority will conduct an in-depth analysis of specific areas experiencing significant surplus of school places and concerns about falling roll within the next 3 years. The findings will inform discussions and strategy development in localised meetings aimed at addressing any issues of surplus, with an updated strategy being published in 2028 addressing these issues. Whilst Bristol City Council are not recommending PAN reductions in secondary schools in this strategy, it is likely that schools will no longer be required to breach their PAN. With more Year 7 places available in the city over the next 3 years, it is anticipated that less pupils will choose secondary schools outside of the city.

9.1 In-Year Admissions, Working PANs and Teaching Group Structure

Section 1.4 of the SAC states that admission authorities may admit above their PAN through in-year admissions. The PAN only applies to the relevant age group. This means that admission authorities may not refuse admission to other age groups on the grounds that they have already reached their PAN. They may, however, refuse admission where the admission of another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources. Under clauses 47 to 50 of the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024-25](#), schools and local authorities will be required to cooperate to manage school admissions, and the supply of local school places.

In law, local authorities in England have statutory duties to ensure there are sufficient primary and secondary schools, and school places, for all children of compulsory school age who require one. Local Authorities have broad responsibility for coordinating admissions processes at common points of school entry, for example, to Reception class, to junior or middle school, and high and secondary schools. However, they are not always responsible for setting admissions rules such as how many pupils a school can admit each year, and how applicants will be prioritised if there are more applications than places available.

Each year, school admission authorities will set (determine) admissions criteria, including a published admissions number, or PAN, for admission at normal points of entry to the school. Usually, this means Reception class for infant or through primary schools, year three for junior schools, and year seven for secondary schools. Some areas and schools may have normal points of entry at other ages – for example, in areas with first, middle and high schools, or schools such as university technical colleges which admit at age 14.

For community and voluntary controlled schools, the local authority can choose to increase or reduce pupil intake numbers in response to demographic changes and parental demand. They have no such powers in relation to voluntary aided, trust, or academy schools. One school's admissions decisions can inadvertently impact on other schools in the local area – for example, if one school increases its PAN while a neighbouring school is struggling to recruit, the struggling school may have more spare places than it otherwise would have. Bristol City Council will work with all schools and trusts in the city to ensure transparency relating to working PANs. The Local Authority will work towards a system where the PAN for every year group in each school will be communicated and shared, and these PANs will apply for the whole academic year. The information will be shared in locality groups for transparency between schools in the same planning areas, to improve pupil place planning. This pathway will be developed collaboratively with schools and trusts to ensure a whole city approach.