
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Cyndi Hughes,
Children and Young People Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek members approval of the School Organisation Plan 2013-2017 and for the release of Basic Need capital funding.

Summary

2. The LA has a statutory duty to assess the local need for school places to ensure that every child that is resident within the Borough of Darlington can be provided with a place in a state funded school in Darlington.
3. This School Organisation Plan aims to provide an overview of current supply and future demand of pupil places across Darlington to support the strategic planning of the future pattern and provision of school places across the Borough.
4. In consultation with schools the Plan identifies the priorities that will be considered when planning future provision and these have been used to identify a range of expansion projects in five primary schools to meet the need for additional school places.
5. In 2012/13 the LA was allocated Basic Need Capital funding to support the expansion of school places and this report recommends the release of £1,577,503 of this funding to support the immediate need in the primary sector.
6. Approval of these projects will provide an additional 385 places across the primary phase of education to meet the recommendations within the School Organisation Plan and create sufficient places with an element of choice and diversity for parents.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) The School Organisation Plan 2013-2017 is approved.
 - (b) 2012/13 Basic need capital funding is released to support the creation of additional primary school places across the Borough.
 - (c) It is recommended that the Director of People be given delegated authority, to define the specific funding allocations to support each of the individual school expansion proposals included in this document.

Delegations

8. Delegated authority will enable feasibility work to be undertaken and accurate costs to be developed to ensure that funding is targeted appropriately in accordance with the priorities in the School Organisation Plan.

Reasons

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) To meet the Local Authority's statutory duty to manage the supply of school places and ensure every child, living in the Borough, has access to quality education provision.
 - (b) To release capital funding to support the provision of additional places to meet an immediate need for increased capacity within the primary phase of education.
 - (c) To ensure funding is spent appropriately and best value is achieved in detailed work to identify costs and scope budgets.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

Primary Pupil Projections for Darlington – Spring 2012 (Tess Valley Joint Strategy Unit)
Schools census - January 2013

Rachel Kershaw : Extension x 2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	The content of this report will not impact on Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	Positive access and choice of full time education for young people.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	No individual or group is adversely affected by this report.
Wards Affected	This report recommends the creation of additional school places in the following wards: Houghton West, Eastbourne, Park East, Middleton St George and Sadberge and Whessoe. However, the overarching School Organisation Plan and the management of additional school places could affect families living in all wards across the Borough.
Groups Affected	This report will have a direct impact on the families of pre-school and primary age children but the overarching strategy is likely to have an effect on all residents who have children requiring a school place.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This report represents a key decision as it is likely to affect communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	This paper does not represent an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The School Organisation Plan is consistent with the themes of Aspiring Darlington: providing high quality facilities that support modern approaches to education and learning.
Efficiency	The outcome of this report is to ensure the efficient supply and demand for school places, whilst providing an element of choice and diversity for families.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

10. Darlington Borough Council has a statutory duty to ensure there is a school place available for every child living within the Borough. This duty comes into force in the September after a child's fourth birthday and remains until the child leaves statutory school education or training.
11. To comply with this duty the Local Authority can manage the availability of school places through maintained schools, for which it has direct control, or through commissioning places in conjunction with Academies, Voluntary Aided Schools, Free Schools and with Special Schools or Independent providers for children requiring additional support to meet their special educational needs.
12. There is no prescriptive definition of how the supply of school places should be managed but given the wide and diverse range of schools in Darlington and the positive collaborative approaches encouraged under the local banner of schools@onedarlington, it is important to ensure that an open and transparent arrangement is introduced for engaging with all schools.
13. Over the last nine months, consultation and discussion has been underway that has helped shape and develop a School Organisation Plan for Darlington (**Appendix 1**). This plan aims to provide a strategic focus for the coordinated and planned provision of school places across the Borough.
14. In developing the School Organisation Plan it has been recognised and accepted that the role of the Local Authority has shifted from a 'provider' of school places to that of a 'commissioner' of school places and that future funding allocations are likely to be targeted towards Academies and Free Schools as the providers. In recognition of this shifting arrangement and the local context for schools in Darlington, the principles of the School Organisation Plan aim to bring all partners together to agree overarching priorities and target all available funding, current and future, in a coordinated attempt to meet the agreed outcomes of a 'Quality place for every child'.
15. The Plan considers the supply and demand of school places initially between 2013 and 2017, but recognises constant fluctuations in pupil population will require an annual review process with updates and revisions agreed as appropriate.

Pupil Projections

16. The School Organisation Plan includes specific detail in terms of the number of pupils projected to attend each school within Darlington over the next five years. This data can never be entirely accurate as parents are free to make a preference for a school place of their choice and many factors can influence these views. However, the process for calculating school pupil projections has improved vastly in recent years and trend data is becoming much more reliable, with links to planning applications for new housing developments and GP patient register data for the numbers of new births each year.

17. The School Organisation Plan evidences need for additional primary school places with a particular shortage already being experienced in the Reception year group.
18. Within the time period of the plan, the current projections recommend the implementation of at least 300 additional places in the primary phase of education. The plan explains that there are currently sufficient places in the secondary sector but that future revisions will need to consider an increase in pupil numbers moving into secondary education.

Meeting Demand

19. Following an extensive period of consultation the School Organisation Plan identifies a number of Priorities and Objectives that have been considered in taking forward the identification of where to locate additional school places.
20. Individual proposals from schools across the Borough have been assessed against these priorities and objectives to provide a recommended range of proposals across five primary schools. The proposals provide an additional 385 places to be created in the following schools (further information about each proposal is provided on pages 29-33 of the School Organisation Plan):

	Increase in Admission Number	Additional Places
St Bede's Academy	15	105
Skerne Park	15	105
St George's	15	105
St Teresa's	5	35
Bishopton/Redmarshall	5	35
		385

21. Although St George's School will provide a total of 105 additional places, the School Organisation Plan recommends an expansion of only 35 places until evidence can be presented of a consistent need for additional places. The Governing Body of the school are aware of this arrangement and have accepted this proposal. Should a need for further places be demonstrated, future revisions of the School Organisation Plan will seek additional funding for a full 105 place expansion.
22. In line with the legislative consultation requirements for changes to a schools planned admission number, these additional places cannot formally be introduced until September 2014. However, all of the schools have the physical capacity currently within their premises to accommodate additional children for the first year of increased intake, on the condition that capital investment is released to support additional accommodation for subsequent years of increased pupil numbers. This means that some additional children could be accommodated from September 2013, rather than referring families through the appeals route.

Financial Implications

23. To support the expansion of school places in five primary schools, Cabinet are requested to approve the release of capital funding currently held by the Local Authority. This funding was allocated by the Department for Education to the Local Authority in 2012/13 for the express purpose of meeting a basic need for the provision of school places.
24. The total amount of unallocated basic need funding available to the Local Authority currently stands at £1,577,503.
25. At this stage, the proposals for expansion have not been developed through feasibility studies or detailed cost analysis. This report seeks approval of delegated powers to the Director of People, which will enable each project to be developed through feasibility stage, accurate costs applied and the funding level for each project confirmed.
26. In discussions with schools, it has been made clear that the basic need capital is only available for the provision of additional places. Schools that wish to make further additions to their facilities or remodel areas of the school to improve the suitability and layout, are aware that they will need to seek additional capital funding to support these ambitions. As all of the schools in this proposal are Academy schools or Voluntary Aided schools they have the ability to bid for such funding direct from the Education Funding Agency or the Diocese.
27. Once detailed costs have been attributed to all projects any remaining balance of basic need funding will held by the Local Authority and used to support revisions to the School Organisation Plan for the implementation of further levels of additional school places across the borough.

Legal Implications

28. Education Act 1996, Part 1, Chapter III, Section 14 places a statutory duty on the Local Authority to assess the local need for school places to ensure that every child that is resident within the Borough of Darlington can be provided with a place in a state funded school in Darlington.

Procurement Advice

29. As all of the schools in this proposal are Academy schools or Voluntary Aided schools there are a range of options available for the procurement of the design and construction elements of the work. As part of the feasibility stage of the projects a report will be considered by the Council's Asset Management and Capital Programme Review Board as to how to take these projects forward through the delivery stage.

Consultation

30. Significant consultation has been undertaken in developing the School Organisation Plan and in reviewing the individual proposals from schools. Full details of the consultation process and the establishment of the School Place Planning Steering Group are provided within the Plan itself.

Outcome of Consultation

31. The outcome of the consultation is that all schools across the Borough support the priorities and objectives outlined in the plan. All schools are aware and supportive of the proposed projects. Through the principles of schools@onedarlington schools are committed to 'development and improvement in ways that best serves the children in each respective community, but ensuring, however, that any development is not at the detriment to the service provided to a partner schools and its community'.