

# School Organisation Plan

## 2024-2034



# Foreword

By 2033 we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where all children have a great start to life and receive the education that they need to achieve their goals. We want to ensure that children are seen and heard, feel safe to grow and that everyone benefits from education in Surrey. Most importantly, we want to make sure that no one is left behind.

All children and young people should benefit from an education that allows them to make the most of their skills, employment and opportunities to help them to lead the best possible life. We want all Surrey pupils and young people to live healthy, active, and fulfilling lives, and for our nurseries, schools, and colleges to equip them to make good choices about their life and wellbeing. All children and young people should be able to feel safe and confident in their education.

92% of Surrey's maintained schools are currently providing a good or outstanding education for our children and young people. It is vital that the strategies and principles laid out in this plan, and which fundamentally underpin our school organisation decisions, support us in maximising the equality of opportunity and quality of provision across all different age groups, need types and parts of the county.

Across Surrey, we are proud of our partnerships and the outcomes that these partnerships achieve for our young people. We want to nurture our existing partnerships in an ever-shifting educational landscape, and work to forge new ones so that we can continue to make school organisational decisions that create a sufficiency of school places across the county and secure educational provisions that are sustainable in the long term. We strive to discuss collaborative solutions in terms of school organisation that will help to protect our small and vulnerable schools to ensure their long-term viability and sustain the value that they bring to our school community and their own local communities.

We will work collegiately to plan school organisation in Surrey with our schools, academy trusts, and other educational partners to ensure that they feel supported to provide the highest quality of education for our children and young people to achieve the best long-term outcomes. We want to invest locally to support children and young people to have their needs met closer to home. We will work closely with partners, constantly striving to do better and to tackle inequalities - diversity is important to us; we are building belonging and including everyone to help each other grow.

**This plan sets out our aims for providing education close to home by local providers, who can support all children and young people to live, learn and grow to succeed.**



*Clare Curran*

Cabinet Member – Education and Learning



*Julia Katherine*

Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

# Duties and Legislations

Under specific legislation and subsequent amendments, local authorities have statutory duties for providing school places as follows:

- Ensure sufficient school places to meet demand (Education Act 1996)
- Increase opportunities for parental choice (Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Ensure fair access to educational opportunity (Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Keep special educational provision under review, including planning, commissioning, and monitoring (Children & Families Act 2014, Section 21, part 3)
- Act as the lead strategic commissioner of education and training for 14- to 19-year-olds in provision other than schools (The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009)

In relation to the provision of education for children with special educational needs, the council must also pay heed to the following:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 2 (Care Planning Placement and Case Review) and Vol 3 (Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers)
- Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years (2015)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations (2014)
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school (2017)
- The Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice: Protecting the vulnerable (2005)

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 increased the strategic role of local authorities as champions of pupils and parents, and incorporated a duty to act as commissioner of school places, rather than the sole provider. The main legislation governing school organisational changes is found in sections 7-32 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011.

In addition, the Department for Education has also issued the following guidance:

- Opening and Closing Maintained Schools (January 2023).
- Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools (January 2023).
- Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreements (April 2024 and January 2023).
- Establishing a new academy: the free school presumption route — Departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers (January 2023).

Under Surrey County Council's scheme of delegation, decisions relating to school organisation within the remit of the council are delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, except in the case of opening or closing schools, where the Leader of the Council makes the final decision.

As the role of the local authority has evolved to being a strategic commissioner of a mixed school system, the Council wishes to work closely with all schools in Surrey, irrespective of their school status.

However, we recognise that schools, Governing Bodies, Diocesan Authorities, Academy Trusts, the Regional Director (RD) on behalf of the Secretary of State, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA), all have collective duties and roles to play in planning, providing, and funding school places.

# Pupil Place Planning Principles

As the statutory and strategic commissioner of educational provision, effective pupil place planning is an essential process that enables the council to work with schools and stakeholders to commission and create high quality school places. To deliver this strategic role in an open and transparent way, a set of clear school organisation principles underpin our approach.

- To undertake a robust and comprehensive approach to forecasting the number of children and young people requiring school places in mainstream, specialist, and other provision.
- To fulfil the requirement to meet the need for school places ensuring sufficient places for Surrey residents who require them and providing an appropriate level of preference.
- To consider the challenges and actions that may need to be taken to ensure sustainability of existing small local schools.
- To endeavour to agree Published Admissions Numbers (PANs) in multiples of 30, and that school provision is generally co-educational.
- To provide, where new schools are needed, primary schools that are at least two forms of entry (420 places) and secondary schools that are at least six forms of entry (900 places) or larger to aid sustainability.
- To ensure that new primary schools provide from Reception year to Year 6, and that new secondary schools provide from Year 7 to Year 11. Pre-school provision should be included if a need for this is identified.
- To promote and strengthen local links between schools that would benefit the schools and the community.
- To identify latent or vacant capacity in neighbouring areas so that it can be used to meet demand, where these schools are within a reasonable distance.
- To make certain that all school organisational changes promote the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) into mainstream settings.
- To provide a sufficiency of state-maintained specialist school places locally for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who require one.
- To ensure that commissioning of specialist school places in the non-maintained and specialist independent sector is only utilised where placements represent value for money, better long-term outcomes and is the most appropriate provision that can meet an individual's identified special educational needs.
- To make available the provision of state maintained Alternative Provision to serve pupils, parents/carers, and schools on a local basis through the provision of planned short-term educational placements.
- To offer an objective view of stakeholder proposals in a clear and transparent way, and support stakeholder's proposals where appropriate to a conclusion.
- To be flexible in providing school buildings that do not create future surplus places but safeguard a sufficiency of places.
- To make certain that decision making processes on proposals should consider factors that are inextricably linked with school organisation, such as the admissions processes, parental preferences, school size, published admission numbers and school transport.

# Pupil Place Planning Context

## The National Context

Nationally, the pattern of demand for pupil places in England is changing. The population attending primary and nursery schools peaked in 2019 and the figures have been dropping since then. This is primarily due to the continued reductions in the birth numbers since 2013, although there was a larger drop in the national population in 2021 which may have been connected to the pandemic. Figures have been stable for the two years since then but are expected to fall from 2024 onwards.

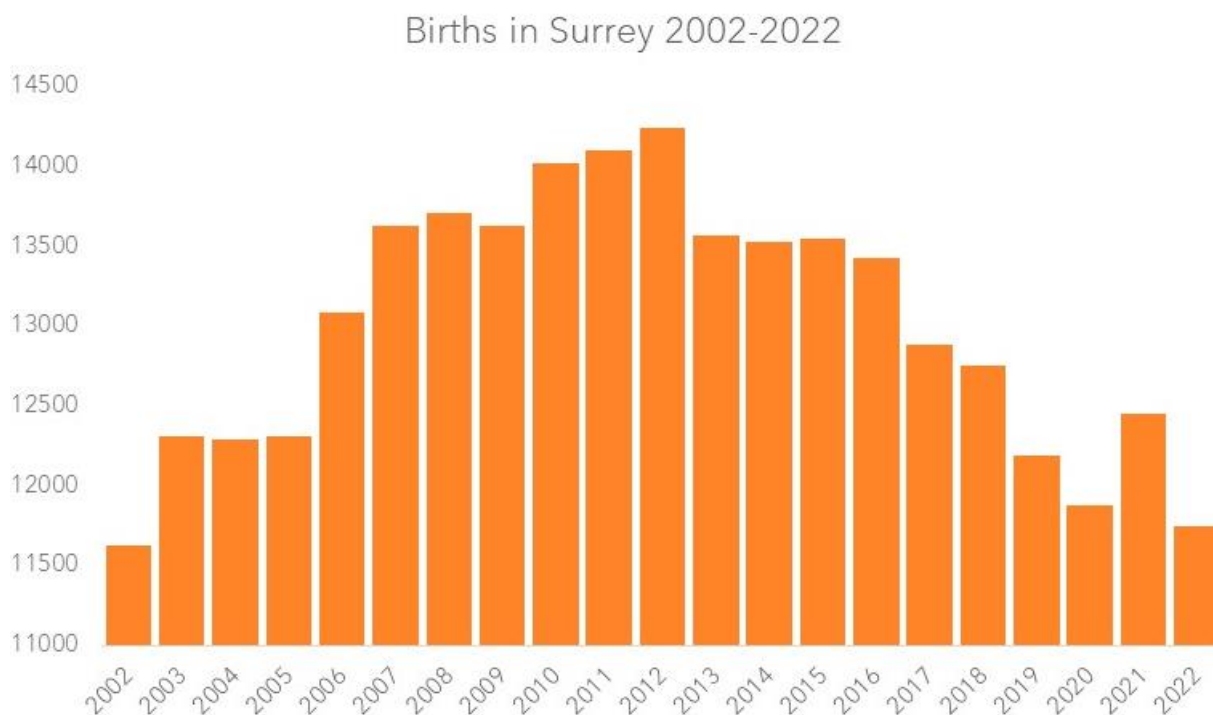
The peak in the national secondary school population is projected to be in the 2024 – 2025 academic year, followed by a fall throughout the rest of the projection period.

The population in special schools has been increasing and is also projected to peak nationally around 2025 before starting to slowly drop. This is primarily driven by the decrease in the overall population from the same point.

The number of children in alternative provision schools fell substantially in 2021 and 2022 as the pandemic reduced the opportunities to refer children. Figures have risen in 2023 and are projected to stay at similar levels.

## Surrey Context

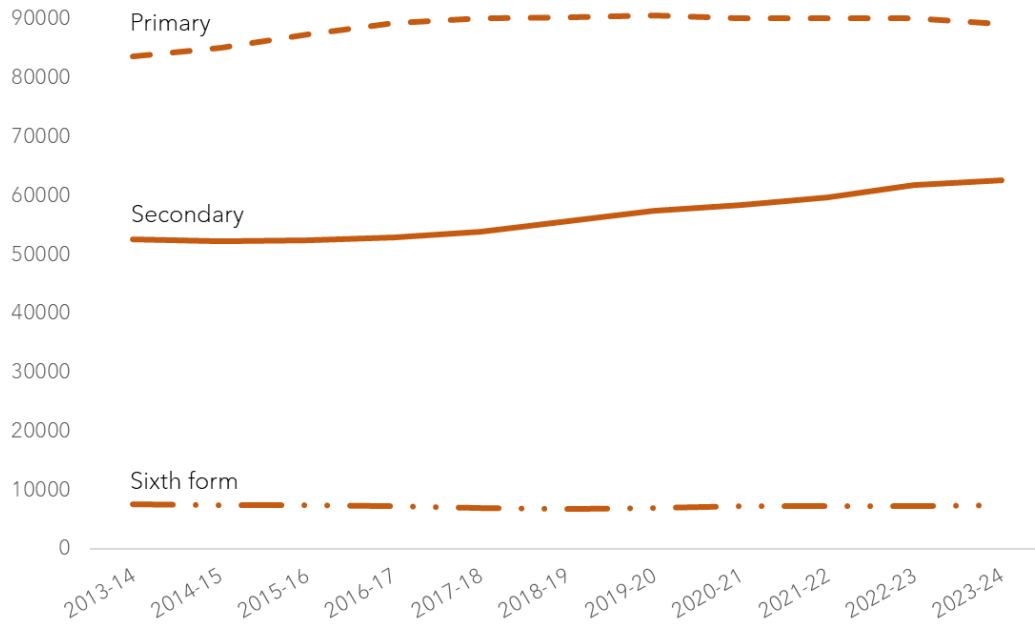
In Surrey, the pattern of demand for pupil places has largely been reflective of the birth rate, alongside migration and housing trends.



Surrey has largely followed the national trend with regards to births - the county experienced an increase in births, with growth of 22% in the decade between 2002 and the peak in 2012, followed by a significant birth decline from 2013. With the exception of 2021, the number of births in Surrey have continued to decline since and in 2022 the birth rate was the lowest in the county since 2002, with a decline of 17.5% from the peak in 2012. The increase in births in 2021 is suspected to be caused by the easing of pandemic restrictions.

## Population of Surrey's state maintained schools

Source: January school census 2014-2024

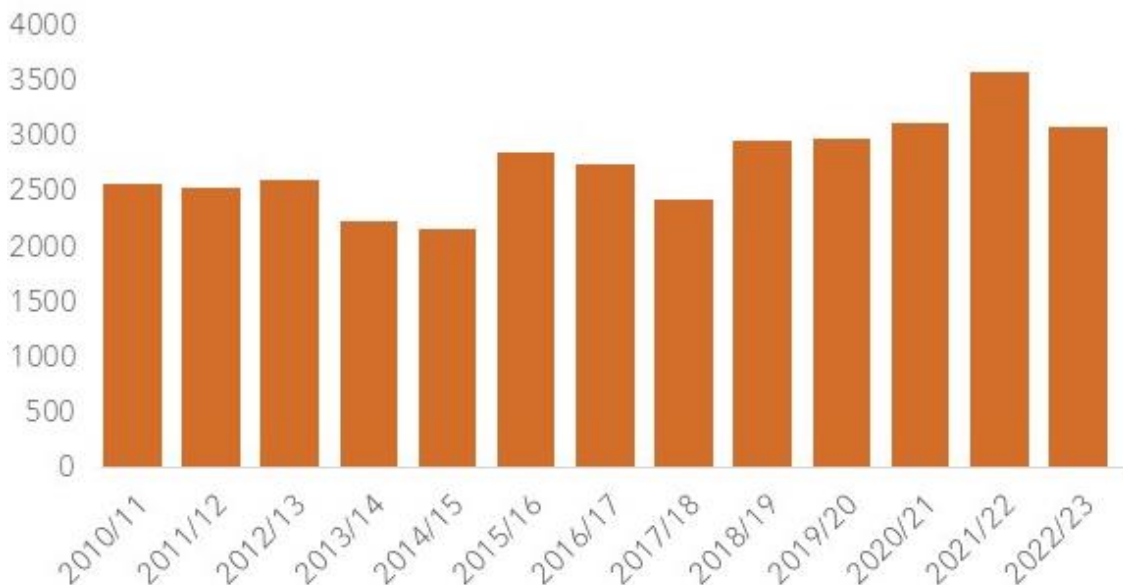


The decline in birth rate means that Surrey has seen a fall in the number of pupils in primary education in the county, with year groups Reception to Year 2 being the most significantly affected. Any growth in the number of primary pupils over the next three to four years is expected to be generated by additional pupils created from new housing, with underlying demographic trends remaining generally static.

However, the secondary sector continues to see increasing numbers of pupils as the larger primary cohorts from the birth peak now transfer into secondary education. However, this is expected to fall over the next five years as the impact of the lower birth rate makes its way into secondary schools. Again, any long-term increases in pupils are expected to come primarily from new housing.

New housing developments will result in an increase in the number of pupils that need a place at Surrey schools. Planning permissions for housing falls within the remit of the eleven district and borough councils within Surrey.

## Number of new homes completed in Surrey



To support the projecting of pupil numbers, local councils share this information with Surrey County Council by providing data on housing permissions and trajectories, which are incorporated into long term pupil place forecasts. Regional plans and government policies seek to increase the level of housing that the county should provide. As additional housing is now the primary cause of place planning pressures in Surrey, it is a significant contributor to the place planning challenges that Surrey now faces.

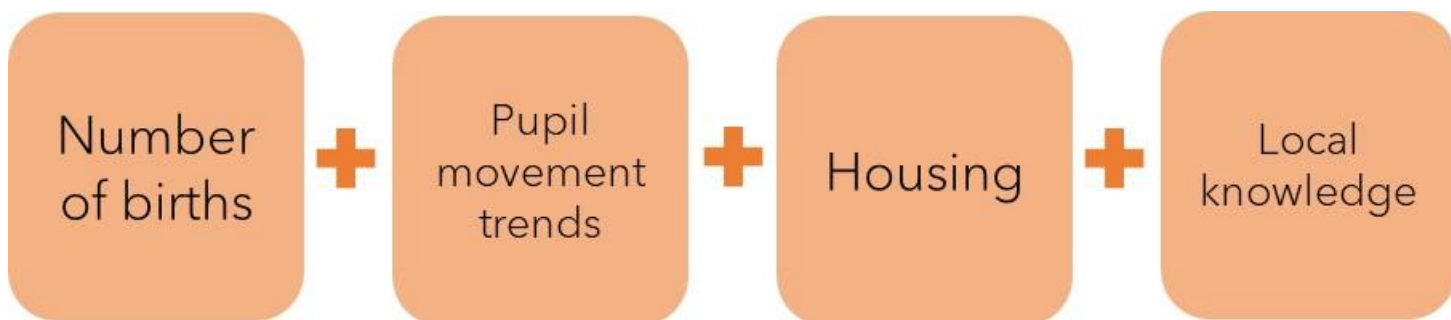
# Pupil place planning in Surrey

Effective pupil place planning is an essential process that enables us to work with schools and stakeholders to commission and create high quality school places where they are needed. These fulfil the requirement to meet the basic need for school places and provide the right level of preference for parents.

We undertake a robust and comprehensive approach to pupil place planning that projects the number of children requiring school places in both mainstream and specialist schools. But looking into the future is challenging and uncertain, and whilst our pupil projections take into account current and past trends, they do not attempt to predict the possible effect of any future changes until they happen, and their impact can be quantified.

## Pupil projections for mainstream schools

In projections for mainstream school places, schools are split into 'planning areas' for both primary and secondary phases. Planning areas do not have geographical boundaries but are schools that are grouped to reflect the local geography, reasonable travel distances and existing pupil movement patterns. Therefore, some planning areas may include schools that are in different boroughs or districts.

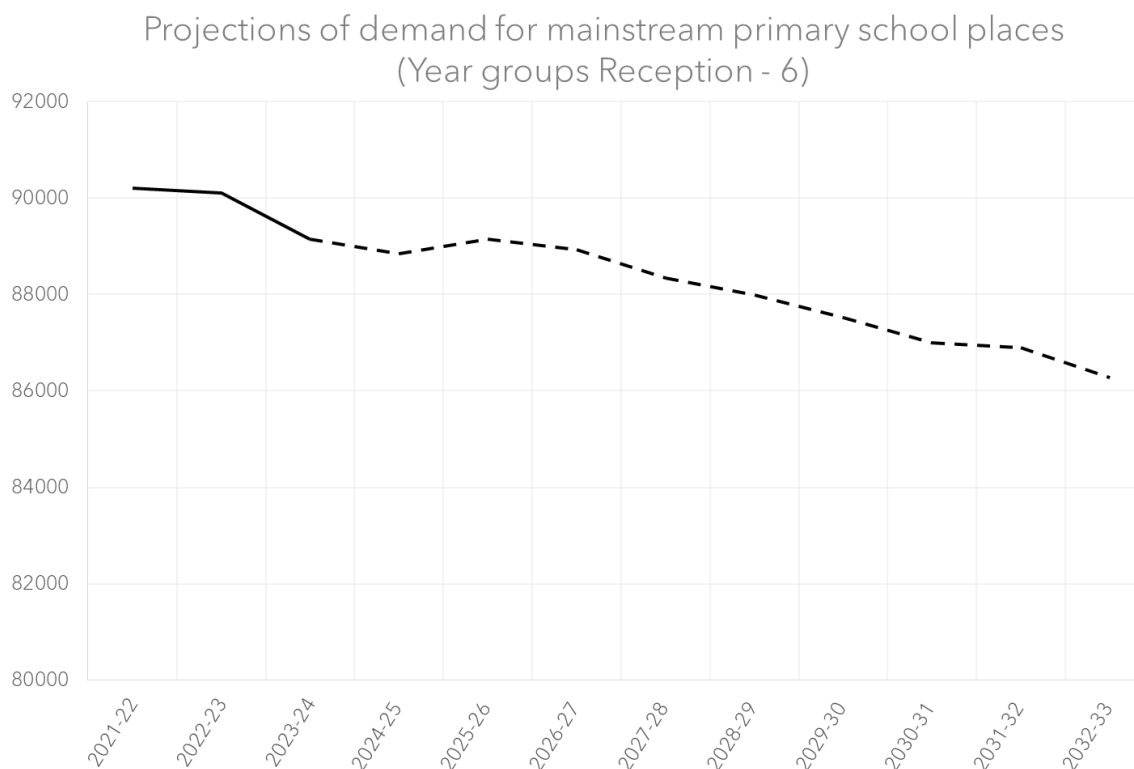


Birth data underpins all forecasts. Birth data is collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) by electoral ward. Underlying demographic trends are also considered using mid-year population estimates from the ONS alongside fertility rates and projections of the number of women of child-bearing age. Data on current pupils is also collected from the School Census and used to track pupil movement patterns between schools, in and out of the county and between educational phases (such as primary to secondary). This allows us to establish pupil movement trends, which are then applied to population numbers going forward based on where children are resident or already attending school.

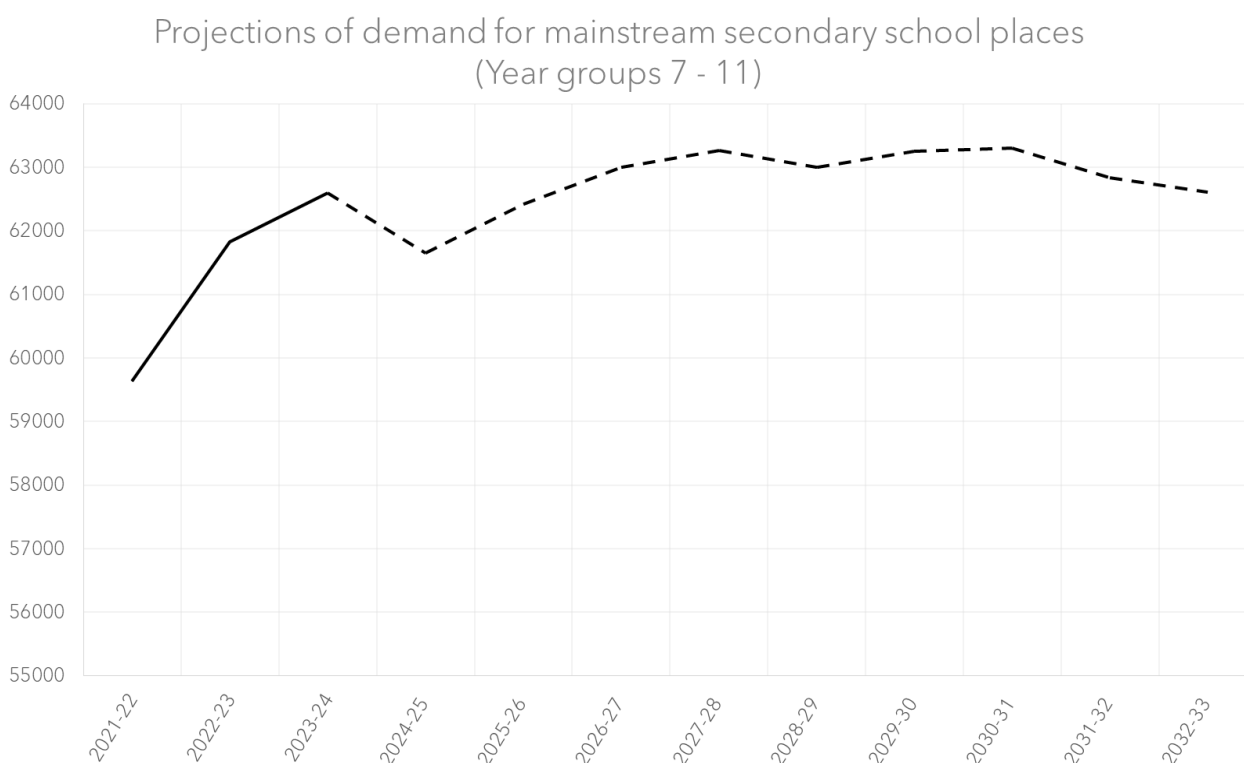
Housing permissions and trajectories are received from the district and borough councils and are combined with birth and pupil movement trends in specialised demographic forecasting software called 'Edge-ucate', which creates pupil projections in a variety of different formats. Projections are also informed by detailed local knowledge enhanced through consultation with parents and carers and good relationships with schools. The resulting pupil projections allow the council to ensure that every Surrey child who requires one is offered a school place.



## Demand for places in mainstream schools



In the short term, the falling birth rate will mean the number of children requiring a primary school place is likely to have peaked in 2016/17. After that time any increases in primary school demand will largely be because of inward migration and housing, causing pockets of high demand in certain areas but a landscape of surplus places in others. Surrey's approach to school planning must therefore adapt to support small and isolated populations in its more rural areas, as well as the more concentrated urban populations.



In the secondary sector, demand is offset by approximately eleven years from birth. This means that the pressures faced in the primary sector are now transitioning into secondary schools. As such, the

secondary school population is projected to increase in most areas in the short term, before stabilising and declining in some areas from 2025 onwards. From this time, any demand pressures in secondary schools are likely to result from migration or additional housing.

Although school place demand is based on areas, it must also consider parental preference for mainstream, or school place requests for children with an EHCP, as parents/students are under no obligation to apply for a place at their nearest school. The council strives to meet parental preference wherever possible and parents are permitted to express preferences for four schools for primary phase, and six schools for secondary phase. Surrey County Council's planning is effective in this regard and for September 2024, the council has been able to offer a place at a preferred school to:

98.8% of Reception applicants

97.1% of Junior applicants

95.9% of Secondary applicants

Demand for places in mainstream schools also includes children with an Education Health and Care Plan whose needs can be met by mainstream educational provision. The number of children with an EHCP and attending a mainstream school has increased by approximately 32% since 2019/20.

### Demand for places in post-16 sixth forms and colleges

Participation in education and training for those aged 16-18 (and up to 25 for those with an EHCP) is available in a range of forms:

- full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider; or
- full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with part-time education or training leading to relevant regulated qualification; or
- an apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship.

Projection of demand is more complex for the post-16 age group due to the increased breadth of learner choice compared to those of statutory school age. Potential future demand is determined through analysis of population projections, provider capacity, funding allocations, travel to learn patterns and trends in participation at borough level. Availability of opportunities such as apprenticeships and supported internships are dictated by the labour market and as such can fluctuate creating unexpected pressures in other areas of provision.

The demand being seen within the secondary sector is increasing the pressure on Surrey's post-16 education and training market, further impacted by Surrey being a net importer of learners from neighbouring authorities. Demand is not uniform across the county and there will be pockets of local pressure, particularly in relation to availability of specific sector subject areas. Recent growth in demand for EHCPs is also increasing the pressure on providers offering specialist programmes designed for learners with additional needs and disabilities.

The Council will work with education and training providers alongside local employers to ensure that all young people are encouraged and supported to participate in education and training leading towards sustained employment. This will require a balanced increase in places within school sixth forms and colleges with accommodate learner choice whilst also meeting skills gaps identified by local employers.

## Pupil projections for specialist schools and units

In projections for specialist school places for children with Education, Health and Care Plans, Surrey uses the same basic demographic projections as for mainstream pupils and these are underpinned by the same birth, population, and housing data. Pupil movement trends are also determined in a similar way, using information from the school census alongside the council's pupil level information.

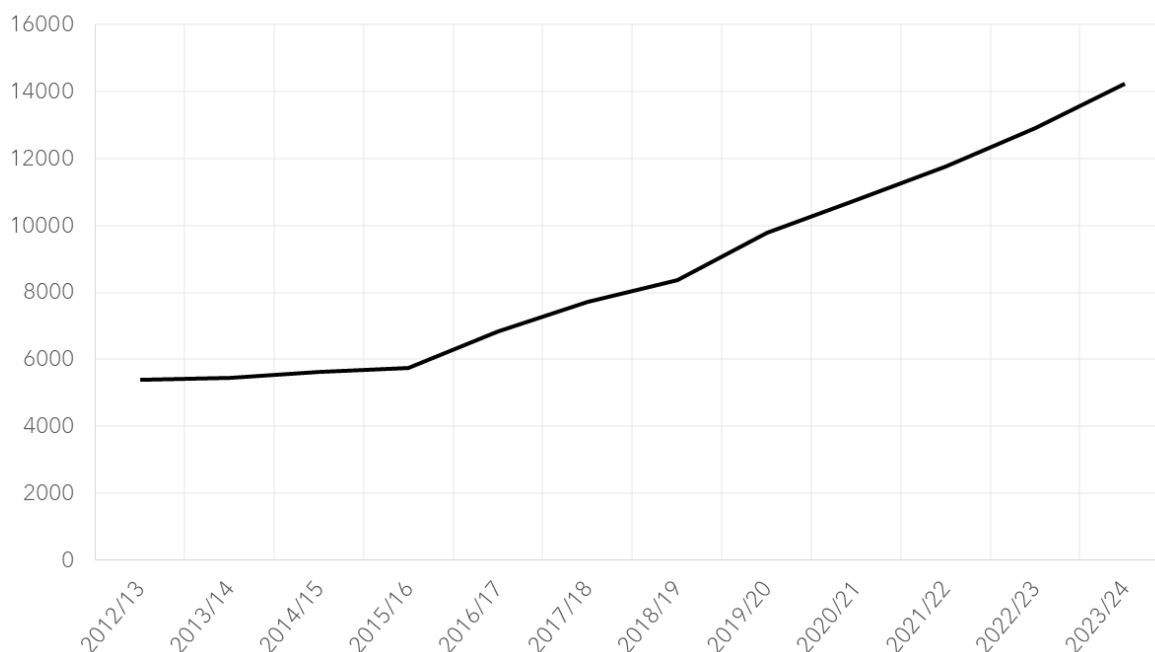
However, whilst the proportion of children with an EHCP attending a mainstream educational setting is included as part of our mainstream projections, the demand generated by those children whose needs mean they require a specialist school place is projected separately. Additional information relating to a child's special educational need, such as their primary need, must be considered, and a much broader range of educational settings, including those in the maintained, academy, non-maintained and independent sectors, are fed into these projections.

Specialist school place demand is currently analysed for each of Surrey's four quadrants (North East, North West, South East and South West) rather than smaller scale planning areas, because it involves a significantly smaller number of pupils and because there is also a wider range of educational provision available. In Surrey, as is the case nationally, specialist provision does not just meet the needs of learners in the immediate surrounding area, so it has a far wider intake than most mainstream schools.

Specialist place sufficiency planning is also informed by detailed local knowledge enhanced through consultation with parents and carers and good relationships with local schools. This supports the strategic approach to evidence-informed place planning.

## Demand for places in specialist schools and units

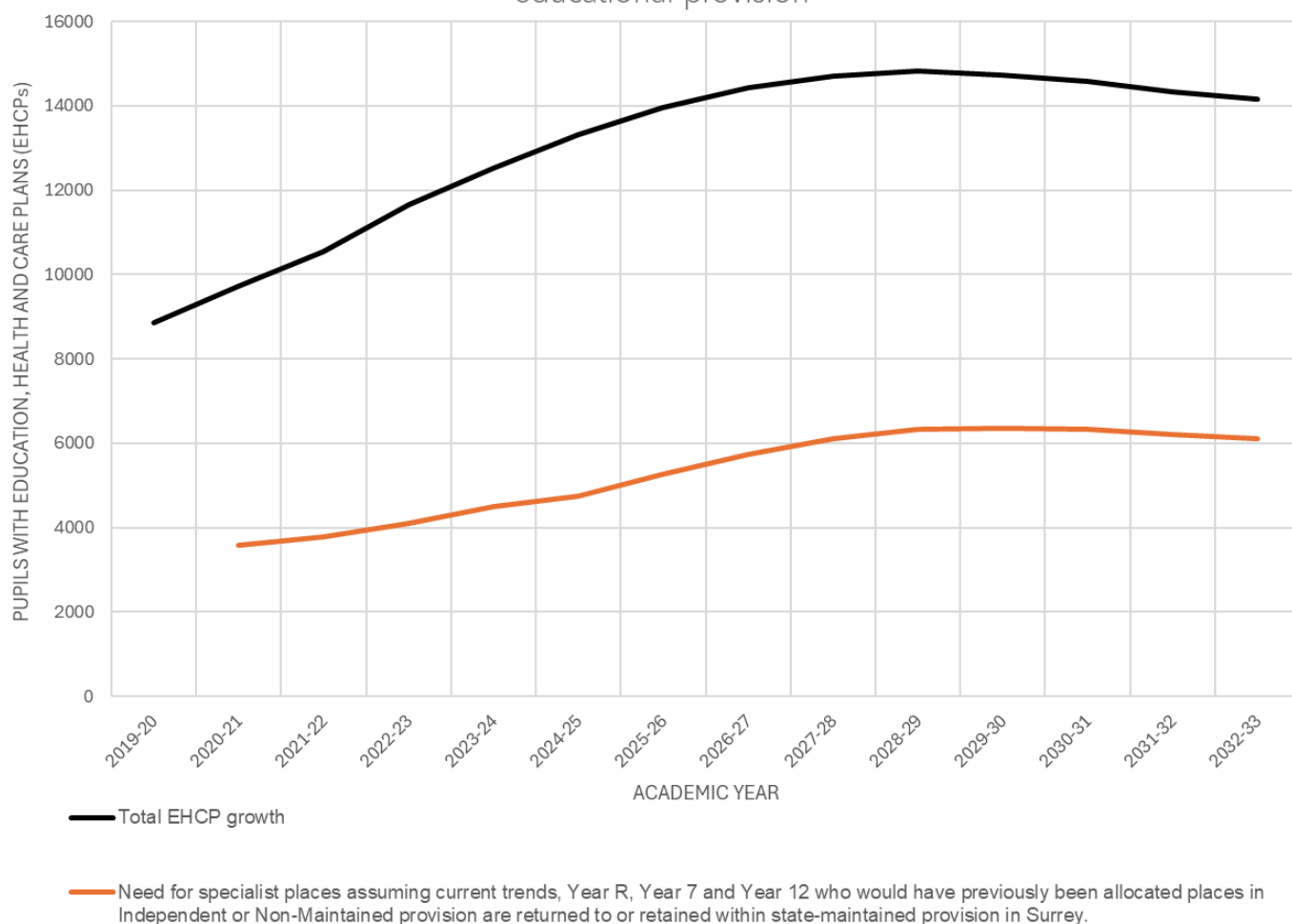
All EHCPs for children and young people aged 0-25 maintained by Surrey



Since 2015, the number of pupils with an EHCP in Reception to Year 14 (ages 4 – 19 years) whose EHCP is maintained by Surrey and who require a specialist school place has more than doubled. Prior to this, pupils' additional needs and disabilities were identified in a Statement, and in the five years from 2010, there was growth of only 5% in the number of Surrey pupils with a Statement. This increase in growth can potentially be attributed, in part, to the increase in the birth rate, the changes

brought about by the Children and Families Act and the SEND Regulations in 2014, the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice in 2015, and the improvements to earlier identification of need.

Growth in all EHCPs for pupils in year groups 0-14 vs growth in students with an EHCP who require a place in a Surrey state maintained specialist educational provision



However, demand is not uniform across the county and there are some areas where there are currently insufficient places to cater for some SEND need types. Developing and maintaining high quality specialist provision in Surrey is therefore vital to ensure placements for the county’s most vulnerable children and young people who have complex additional needs and disabilities and who require specialist educational provision.

The number of maintained specialist school places in year groups Reception to Year 14 across Surrey has grown significantly by 28% over the past five years from around 3,320 in 2019 when the Capital Programme started to around 4,240 places now. Surrey County Council’s [Safety Valve Agreement](#) with the Department for Education, which aims to eliminate the council’s Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (DSG HNB) deficit, includes a condition to deliver an ambitious Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Capital programme that will improve the long-term sufficiency of state-maintained specialist educational provision that meets the needs of communities across Surrey.

Between 2019 and 2023 Surrey’s Cabinet approved the strategies and capital investment of c£260m for the SEND and AP Capital Programme. With this investment the programme is aiming to deliver a total of 2,440 permanent additional specialist school places across the county between 2019-2027 to create capacity for 5,760 places by 2030/31, which represents growth of 73% from 2019.