

Children's Services

Place Planning Strategy

2020 - 2025

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CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY	1
BACKGROUND	1
CURRENT PROVISION	3
Primary Schools	3
Secondary Schools	4
Special Provision and Alternative Education	5
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND EMERGING PRIORITIES	6
Primary Schools	7
Secondary Schools	10
Special Educational Needs	12
GENERAL APPROACH AND KEY PRINCIPALS	12
Increasing Provision	13
Decreasing Provision	14
School Standards	15
DELIVERY	16
Partnership Working	16
Funding	17
MAINTAINING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY	18

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

1. Middlesbrough Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand. It is imperative that the local authority can strike a balance between ensuring there is an appropriate place for every child, whilst avoiding the risks associated with maintaining high levels of surplus places. High levels of surplus places are an inefficient use of scarce public resources and, combined with high levels of school competition, can lead to schools becoming unviable, struggling to maintain standards and ultimately leading to disruption for pupils and their families.
2. The Place Planning Strategy, therefore, articulates Middlesbrough Council's approach to the provision and management of school places. It aims to set a framework against which the council and its partners can plan to meet future changes in the demographics of the town.
3. The strategy is predominantly concerned with the supply of places for statutory-school-age children in Middlesbrough's primary, secondary and special schools. It covers all schools within the town maintained at public expense: those maintained locally (community and foundation); and those maintained nationally (academies and free schools).
4. Setting out the issues and challenges of ensuring the efficient and effective supply of school places, the purpose of the strategy is to:
 - ensure that the council meets its statutory responsibility to secure sufficient school places for statutory school-age children;
 - provide local demographic information to inform place planning, setting out the main drivers of changes to the school-age population;
 - establish the principles, policies and methods that will be used to manage the provision of school places;
 - establish priorities for action to influence priorities for investment in schools;
 - Set out how the council will engage with its schools, providers and other partners in delivering the strategy.

BACKGROUND

5. School place planning in Middlesbrough takes place against a backdrop of increasingly diverse, autonomous school providers. Since 2010 Middlesbrough Council has worked to facilitate the conversion of schools to academies, and has seen a rapid increase in levels of school autonomy as a result.
6. The majority of Middlesbrough's schools are now academies and are enjoying the freedoms this entails. The corresponding reduction in the council's control over the school estate significantly affects the council's ability to direct the availability and distribution of places across the town.
7. In the small number of cases where the council maintains schools, the power remains to make structural changes to those schools to better suit the changing demographic of the town. This can include changing the size of schools, relocating

them, or closing them where necessary. However, these powers are rarely relied upon, with the council preferring to use them in partnership with the schools concerned.

8. Over recent years the wider academy landscape has also started to evolve, with a higher number of local and regional Multi-Academy Trusts emerging, complemented by a number of national providers. These trusts are well placed to plan and make decisions across their estate in order to facilitate good place planning.
9. Much, therefore, depends on the participation of the council's partners and education providers. As the council's role as a provider of school places continues to shift towards being a commissioner of places, the success of the strategy will become increasingly reliant upon these relationships and the support and cooperation of these partners.
10. The compact urban nature of Middlesbrough means that most pupils are within walking distance of more than one school. Parents have become accustomed to a significant degree of flexibility over their choice of school. More recently, as the number of surplus places has reduced, parental choice has become more limited and schools have experienced increased levels of admissions appeals and the costs associated with those.
11. Middlesbrough shares borders with three other Local Authorities: Redcar & Cleveland; Stockton; and North Yorkshire. A number of schools in these authorities sit close to the border with Middlesbrough and within easy travelling distance for families. One secondary school in Redcar & Cleveland – Nunthorpe Academy – is the catchment school for a large number of Middlesbrough residents.
12. This results in Middlesbrough being a net exporter of secondary age pupils which makes secondary school place planning particularly susceptible to changes taking place in those other local authorities. The success of the strategy will depend upon increasingly close ties and information sharing with Middlesbrough's neighbours.
13. Birth rates in Middlesbrough started increasing during the 2000s placing pressure on local primary schools. Much of the council's resources since the last strategy have therefore been used to provide places in primary schools to meet the needs of these children as they moved through the primary sector. These cohorts started feeding through to secondary schools in 2015 and are set to continue. While most primary schools remain very full, the focus must now be on ensuring that places are available as they move through the secondary sector.
14. More recently, new patterns of parental preference and domestic and international migration have emerged. There is still too little evidence to be able to determine reliable trends around these factors, which therefore require a deeper understanding of the underlying influences in order to understand the likely impact on demand. It is clear, however, that the turbulence in these factors creates uncertainty in projecting long-term demand at a time when the number of surplus places in schools is limited.

15. The United Kingdom’s likely withdrawal from Europe is also expected to have an impact but the extent of this is not clear. The Government’s approach to migration, the movement of EU nationals and the timing of these changes makes it difficult to estimate the scale and timing of changes to Middlesbrough’s school-age population.
16. Housing development continues to be a major feature across the town, impacting on the distribution of pupils and demand for local schools. The council has ambitious plans to deliver significant numbers of new houses and a developing approach to reinvigorating the town centre as a place to live.
17. The council has the challenging role of planning places for a growing school population against a backdrop of emerging new trends and changing demographics at a time when the availability of places is at its lowest for many years.

CURRENT PROVISION

18. The nature of school provision in Middlesbrough is highly diverse. Most schools over the last nine years have sought to increase their autonomy by becoming an academy or foundation school and the Council has facilitated and supported this shift. There are 56 schools in Middlesbrough, of which 13 (23%) are locally maintained.

Table 1: Types of primary and secondary school

	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Special</i>	<i>Alt Ed</i>	<i>Total</i>
Community	4	0	3	0	7
Faith Academy	11	1	0	0	12
Academy	20	6	2	3	31
Foundation	6	0	0	0	6
Total	41	7	5	3	56

19. The 43 academies and foundation schools are operated by 20 trusts. Four schools are in single academy trusts with the others in multi-academy trusts ranging in size from 1 to 30 schools. The largest provider of schools in Middlesbrough is the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust with 12 schools in Middlesbrough as well as others in neighbouring local authorities.

Primary Schools

20. The primary sector provides 14,400 mainstream school places for 5-11 year olds, with 2,634 (18.3%) of these in faith schools. This is an increase of 779 places since the last Place Planning Strategy in 2012.
21. Academies now account for 71% of all the primary school places available, an increase of 65 percentage points since 2012. Maintained schools are now a minority segment with only 4,164 places (29%). As of June 2019, 87.8% of primary school places were in schools judged to be good or outstanding in Ofsted inspections.

22. Primary schools range in size from the smallest at 210 places to the largest at 630 places. Each school also has an attached nursery catering for three and four year olds, with an increasing number also providing for two year olds. With the push to increase school capacity there has been a corresponding increase in the mean size of primary school from 332 to 351 places.
23. Most families live within easy walking distance of more than one school, and many parents choose schools for their children which are not their catchment school.
24. In January 2019 there were 13,552 pupils aged 5-11 on a Middlesbrough primary school roll. This suggests a surplus capacity of 5.9%, within which some schools are oversubscribed and some undersubscribed.
25. For the purposes of planning school places the town is subdivided into four smaller planning areas arranged based on the schools' locations. The planning areas are:
 - **Central** – 11 schools broadly covering the town centre and housing to the south offering 4,721 places. In January 2019 there were 4,586 statutory school-age pupils attending, leaving a **surplus capacity of 2.9%**.
 - **East** – 11 schools all located to the east of Ormesby Beck offering 3,561 places. In January 2019 there were 3,276 statutory school-age pupils attending, leaving a **surplus capacity of 8.0%**.
 - **South** – 8 schools located at varying distances on either side of Dixons Bank offering 2,135 places. In January 2019 there were 1,990 statutory school-age pupils attending, leaving a **surplus capacity of 6.8%**.
 - **West** – 11 schools located at varying distances on both sides of Acklam Road and the B1365 offering 3,983 places. In January 2019 there were 3,700 statutory school-age pupils attending, leaving a **surplus capacity of 7.1%**.

Secondary Schools

26. The secondary sector provides 9,020 mainstream school places of which approximately 8,181 are available to 11-16 year olds and the remainder set aside for post-16 provision. This is a small increase of 82 places (1%) since the last Place Planning Strategy in 2012. Of these places 14.7% are in the town's only faith secondary school.
27. In 2018 the last community secondary school became an academy. Academies now provide all of the secondary school places in the town, an increase of 50 percentage points since the last strategy. As of June 2019, 79.1% of secondary school places for 11-16 year olds were in schools which were judged good or better in Ofsted inspections.
28. Schools range in size from 825 to 1,470 places when excluding sixth forms or 825 to 1,725 with sixth forms included. The mean average size of secondary schools is 1,289 with post-16 or 1,169 without.
29. Post 16 education is predominantly provided by the independent further education sector at Middlesbrough College and Cleveland College of Art and Design. The King's

Academy, Macmillan Academy and Trinity Catholic College also offer post-16 sixth form provision.

30. Middlesbrough operates a single secondary planning area covering the whole town. The arrangement of catchment areas in the secondary sector make it difficult to subdivide the town into smaller areas. Due to Middlesbrough's relatively compact nature, pupils are generally able to travel to any of the seven schools available to them. Parents will often exercise their preference to choose a school that is not the local catchment school.
31. In January 2019 there were 8,283 pupils on a school roll, with 7,638 of these aged 11-16. Surplus capacity was therefore 8.2% including post-16 provision and 6.6% excluding post 16 provision. All of this surplus is in the upper year groups with surplus increasingly limited in the lower cohorts.

Special provision and alternative education

32. Middlesbrough has five special schools:
 - Holmwood School offering 80 primary-age places for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD);
 - Discovery Special Academy offering 84 primary-age places for Significant Learning Difficulties (SLD);
 - Priory Woods School, an all-through school with post-16 provision offering 195 places for pupils with SLD and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD);
 - Hollis Academy offering 85 secondary-age places for pupils with SEMH needs;
 - Beverley School, an all-through school with post-16 provision offering 143 places for pupils with ASD.
33. In addition, there are a number of specially resourced special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools. A total of 208 places are funded in this way in primary schools and 161 places in secondary schools.

Table 2: Specially resourced places in mainstream schools

<i>Type of need</i>	<i>Primary places</i>	<i>Secondary Places</i>
High Learning Needs (HLN)	36	50
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	31	0
Physical/Medical	53	25
HLN/Visual/Hearing Impairment	88	86
Total	208	161

34. Alternative Education is provided by three Alternative Provision Academies operating under a single multi-academy trust and catering separately for Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES

35. Births are the main driver behind changes in demand for places in Middlesbrough schools and in normal circumstances provide a robust method of forecasting demand for school places. Increases in birth rates normally impact on primary schools five years later and on secondary schools seven years after that.
36. Roll numbers in primary schools, predominantly driven by higher birth rates during the 2000s, have continued to grow. This growth led the Council and local schools to increase the provision of primary school places by almost 800 places since 2012, predominantly in the centre of town where demand has been greatest. A further 151 places are in the pipeline to be built by 2020 and these places are already being offered out to pupils.
37. Since peaking in 2010/11 birth rates have gradually fallen, albeit with an upturn in 2016/17. Demand for Reception places in 2018/19 was therefore lower than previous years and this trend is expected to continue in future years. To some extent, however, the lower births feeding into primary schools are being offset by a reduction in domestic outward migration and a significant increase in international inward migration.
38. Middlesbrough's primary schools have, as a result, experienced net inward migration across the full age range for the past four academic years. This means that despite efforts to increase capacity, some cohorts are still under considerable pressure for places. Parental choice continues to be limited, especially for families of children newly arrived to the country who often take up residence in the town centre and struggle to place all of their children in the same school.
39. The impact of international inward migration varies across the academic year with many families arriving in Middlesbrough and seeking a school place in October and November and then returning to their home country from May onwards. This transience makes it difficult to understand the long-term impact on school places. In addition, the likely impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union is currently unknown.
40. The higher birth rates of the 2000s started to impact on secondary schools in 2015/16, three years after the Building Schools for the Future programme reduced the number of secondary schools by two and the number of places by 1,350. Historically, secondary schools have experienced net outward migration. Although some year groups can experience in-year growth it is difficult to determine long term trends.
41. Recently a sharp increase in the popularity of Middlesbrough's secondary schools, resulting from improved school performance, has increased demand further and

brought forward an anticipated shortage of school places to 2019/20. The key driving factor behind this appears to be improved performance in Middlesbrough's schools combined with a drop in performance in schools in other local authority areas along the town's border. On the basis of this, the planning assumption is that this trend will continue in the short to medium-term as a minimum expectation.

42. The Council's current Local Plan was adopted in 2014. Its aims are to deliver almost 7,000 new dwellings at an average of 410 dwellings a year, with the key strategic aim of stemming population decline and achieving zero net migration from the town. There are clear signs that local outward migration has been reducing as a result of house building but, as yet, it has not resulted in net gains to the school-age population.
43. The plan includes a number of substantial housing developments in excess of 1,000 properties which will have a significant impact on levels of school demand:
 - Brookfields/Stainsby in the west of the town is identified in the Local Plan as being appropriate for 1,670 houses. Some of these properties have already been developed in the south east corner of the site;
 - Newham Hall in the south of town is planned to deliver 1,100 family type dwellings;
 - Hemlington Grange in the west of town is planned to deliver 1,230 family type dwellings and is currently on site.
44. Until there is evidence of net-inward migration as a result of house building the assumption is that the main effect is to redistribute pupils to those parts of town, placing local schools under greater pressure. This has a much more immediate impact on primary schools where parents are more inclined to move schools to be closer to where they live. Parents are less likely to move pupils from one secondary school to another, but in the longer term demand for places in the local secondary school is still expected to increase as a result of the greater number of primary-age pupils living within catchment.
45. Consultation on a new Local Plan was undertaken during 2018 and 2019, with the emerging plan aiming to support local population growth of 0.6% per annum by building further family housing on green-field sites in the south and west of the town. However, this approach is currently being reviewed with a renewed focus on housebuilding in town-centre locations. Consultations on the revised Local Plan are anticipated to take place during summer 2020.

Primary Schools

46. After reaching a low point of 11,334 in 2007/08, the number of pupils requiring a primary school place in Middlesbrough has increased steadily, reaching 13,552 in 2018/19. Roll numbers are expected to increase again next year to 13,729 and remain at broadly that level before starting to slowly decrease from 2022/23.

47. Pressure for places in Reception classes continues to be observed in 2018/19 but not so acutely as in previous years. Slightly lower birth rates have alleviated some of this pressure. Projected reductions in future birth rates are expected to reduce this pressure across the town in the coming years.
48. Across the town it is anticipated there will be sufficient places in the primary sector for the lifetime of the strategy and beyond. However, due to the distribution of places some parts of town are projected to suffer shortfalls, particularly where house building is taking place.
49. In addition some cohorts, particularly the current (2019/20) Year 2 and Year 4, are close to being full. Plans are currently in place to provide a further 151 places in two centre of town primary schools with a view to alleviating some of this pressure. These places will complement the 59 already made available in 2019/20. Most of these places are already being offered out to pupils while construction takes place. Completion of these schemes should ensure that the central cluster of primary schools maintains a small surplus of at least 3% until 2021/22 after which surpluses should start to increase as smaller cohorts of pupils join school.

Priority – Complete the construction of 151 primary school places in the centre of town by 2020.

50. If levels of international inward migration continue to increase then the current (2019/20) Year 2 cohort in the central cluster is projected to have less than 2% surplus places. Year 1 and Year 4 are likely to continue being oversubscribed until these cohorts have worked through the school. There is uncertainty about the levels of inward migration and this will need to be monitored closely.
51. Small numbers of schools tend to account for the majority of pupils from families newly arrived in town from overseas. Turnover of some migrant communities can be higher than 60% per annum. This presents a challenge to maintain standards in schools that already have high levels of disadvantage.

Priority – Continue to monitor levels of international new arrivals in the town centre and the net effect on pupil rolls against the increased offer of places in the centre of town.

Priority – Continue to monitor the number of children waiting an unreasonable amount of time to secure a school place and develop strategies to assist families in securing school places with minimal delay.

52. The East cluster is currently well provisioned for primary school places with a number of schools expanding over recent years to meet parental choice and, in doing so, keep ahead of forecast demand. Over the lifetime of the plan it is not anticipated that there will be any requirement to provide additional places.

53. Large amounts of housing development taking place in the south and west of the town have the potential to place some primary schools located there under increasing amounts of pressure.
54. Overall, the South Cluster has sufficient places to meet demand during the lifetime of the strategy and beyond, maintaining an approximate level of 5% surplus and increasing beyond 10% surplus in the longer term.
55. Housing development in Chandler's Ridge Academy's catchment area has the potential to put the school under pressure and increase demand beyond capacity by 2026/27. Current patterns of parental preference, however, are limiting the effects of the housing, with residents choosing to send their children to a range of local schools. The neighbouring school, The Avenue Academy, has reintroduced previously mothballed classrooms to be able to cope with additional demand and continues to grow in popularity with parents.
56. It is anticipated that investment will be required beyond the timescales of the strategy, as future developments included in the local plan are brought forward, but much will depend upon levels of parental preference for particular schools.
57. With such a relatively small number of places on offer in the South Cluster, it is susceptible to inaccuracies in projected roll numbers. In particular, small increases in the projected yield from housing development or changes to the delivery timescale could lead to a sharp decline in surplus places over a relatively short period of time and has the potential to lead to shortages.

Priority - Keep housing development in the South Cluster under review and monitor the impacts on pupil roll numbers

58. The West Cluster of 11 primary schools currently has 7% surplus capacity. Longer term forecasts show this increasing gradually to 12% but the impact of housing development is expected to reduce this to 5% by 2029/30.
59. The current picture is one in which some schools have relatively high levels of surplus and are easily able to take more pupils into most cohorts, while a smaller number of schools most closely located with the new housing will come under intense pressure for places.
60. The Brookfields development, in particular, is delivering in excess of 1,670 properties with a high proportion of family type residences of 2 or more bedrooms. The masterplan for the area leaves much of the development physically isolated from existing local schools, which are separated from the development by parkland.
61. As a result of the size and design of the development an area of land for community facilities has been identified on site and a commitment made to provide a new primary school to serve the area.

Priority – Develop plans to provide a new primary school to serve the Brookfield housing development.

62. In addition, the developments at Hemlington Grange and Newham Hall Farm could produce additional pressure leading to local schools becoming oversubscribed and there being a shortage of places while other schools' roll numbers fall, leading to much higher levels of surplus places. These three overlapping housing developments are expected to create a complicated picture of demand that will require understanding in full to ensure that school places are added in the right schools at the right time.

Priority – In order to understand the full picture of supply and demand in the West Cluster of primary schools, undertake a full review of the housing developments and likely impact.

Secondary Sector

63. Roll numbers in the town's secondary schools fell until 2014/15 reaching a low point of 7,623 (Y7-14) but have now started increasing again as larger cohorts of pupils join schools in Year 7. A recent (2019/20) increase in the number of parental preferences for Middlesbrough's secondary schools has placed schools under significant pressure, leading the Council to take urgent action to create Year 7 places in schools in order to meet demand. Preferences increased by 5.7% over the previous three year trend, and are the highest the council has observed for at least 20 years.
64. Driving this change is the improved performance of Middlesbrough secondary schools and a relative fall in performance in a number of neighbouring schools in other local authority areas located along the border with Middlesbrough. As a net exporter of secondary age pupils, the town is particularly susceptible to events happening outside of its direct control in other authority areas. Improved partnership working with other local authorities will be important in order to better project demand in Middlesbrough.

Priority – Further develop communications and processes with neighbouring local authorities to ensure that all impacts on Middlesbrough's roll numbers are fully understood and incorporated into future projections models.

65. The council's view is that these drivers will continue to have an influence on parental preference. Projections of future secondary demand have therefore been remodelled to anticipate that these higher levels of parental preference will continue in the short to medium term, and possibly for longer, putting the secondary system under much greater pressure than had previously been expected.
66. Alongside this, higher numbers of pupils attending primary schools as a result of net inward migration, and a reduction in admission numbers of schools outside of Middlesbrough has led to a significant uplift in the secondary projections. As net migration in secondary schools is outwards, pressure will manifest in Year 7 as larger

cohorts of pupils seek places in secondary schools, filling up schools year on year as they progress through the school.

67. Increases to the secondary school roll (Y7-14) are anticipated to be in the magnitude of 325 pupils annually, peaking at approximately 10,563 in 2025/26. Excluding sixth forms the average rate of increase is expected to be 302 annually, peaking at 9,750 in 2025/26. It is expected that demand will remain much higher than has been experienced in recent years, meaning that the pressure will be long-term.
68. In advance of this, without action being taken, it is anticipated that the secondary sector will be short of Year 7 places in 2020/21 and in every subsequent year for the foreseeable future.
69. Plans are currently being put in place to provide a new secondary school in the centre of town where demand is expected to be greatest. The government's Free School Programme confirmed the successful bid by Outwood Grange Academy Trust to establish a 1,050 place secondary school to be located in Middlehaven adjacent to Middlesbrough College. It is planned that the school will offer 150 Year 7 places in its first year of opening in September 2020 and in every subsequent year while it operates from temporary accommodation. This will increase to 210 pupils once the school locates to its permanent site from 2022/23.

Priority – Facilitate the establishment of a new secondary school to serve the centre of town providing 1,050 places.

70. However, this new school will still not meet all of the demand that is projected to be forthcoming in the coming years. Approximately 400 additional Year 7 places will need to be provided in order to meet demand or approximately 700 to provide a 2% operating surplus. It is unlikely that this level of demand will justify a second new Free School. The council must endeavour to work with its partners to provide these additional places at existing schools.

Priority – Work with existing secondary schools to increase secondary school provision by a further 389 places in order to meet demand with a target of 663 places in order to provide a 2% surplus by 2025/26.

Priority – Ensure that places are added in such a way as to meet demand for the Year intake 7 in each academic year.

71. Planned levels of housing development in Middlesbrough could also have a large impact on the school-age population. A slowing of outward migration from secondary schools has been observed in recent years however it is uncertain if these developments will result in net inward migration at some point in the future or simply redistribute existing residents to other parts of town. Each scenario, however, has implications on the pattern of school provision which will need to be monitored closely.

Priority – Continue to monitor migration trends in secondary schools and the impact of housing development, particularly in cohorts where there is expected to be less than 2% surplus places to be able to cope with minor variations.

Special Educational Needs

72. As the profile of young people attending school in the local authority changes, there is a growing pressure on the availability of appropriate school places for pupils with special education needs. As the number of pupils grows in the secondary sector so will the demand for specialist provision both in mainstream settings and special schools.
73. The number of pupils requiring specialist provision in secondary settings, for example SEMH and ASD, is forecast to increase over the next five years. However there is currently insufficient information to be able to segment this demand according to severity of need and academic pathways.

Priority - Analyse current data on pupils with special educational needs and drill down into segmented need.

74. The council is addressing this shortage through a review of its SEN provision with a view to ensuring that demand is being met in an appropriate setting. The following priorities have already been identified.

Priority – undertake a full review of specially resourced provision to ensure that it is meeting pupils’ needs.

Priority – identify mainstream secondary schools to take forward an increase in specially resourced ASD provision.

Priority - Increase number of places for pupils with SEMH at KS4.

Priority - Establish provision for post-16 provision with SEMH.

GENERAL APPROACH AND KEY PRINCIPLES

75. The Department for Education (DfE) considers that 2% surplus places in each year group is sufficient to be able to cope with fluctuations in parental demand and unexpected changes in the school-age population. The experience in Middlesbrough is that 2% surplus is often insufficient to operate an admissions procedure effectively. Small variations in anticipated pupil numbers can leave cohorts with no school places. This impacts on families, who can find it hard to secure places for multiple siblings in the same school. While the council receives capital grant to provide a 2% surplus the aim will be to provide 5%, where funding allows and subject to individual schemes, but less than 10%. The basis of this approach is to ensure that:
- Wasteful use of resources through the maintenance of excess surplus is avoided;

- There is sufficient flexibility within the system to allow for pupil migration;
 - Capacity exists to cope with unexpected increases in the school-age population;
 - An element of parental choice can be maintained.
76. Where the council is responding to demand arising from housing development, the additional uncertainty around pupil numbers justifies the provision of at least 5% surplus in each cohort. The council will endeavour to secure funding to provide a 5% surplus in these situations where there is a secure business case for doing so.
77. School sizes will be determined to suit local need. Schools should not be so big that they are unmanageable but should not be so small that they become unviable to operate. In the primary sector, with so many schools in close proximity, schools with fewer than 210 pupils are considered small whilst others would only rarely be larger than 630.
78. Within the secondary sector, schools should be large enough that they can offer a broad curriculum and range of subjects to provide choice for pupils. Schools with fewer than 800 pupils are deemed to be small.
79. Where a significant change in admission number is made for the purposes of managing the supply of school places, the Authority will engage with schools over how this can be best introduced to ensure that classes can be managed, as cohorts move through the school. In some cases it may be appropriate to make changes temporarily to ensure that schools can operate within their existing accommodation.

Increasing provision

80. The council must ensure that there are sufficient places across the town for all pupils who require one and wishes to ensure that every pupil is able to secure a school place within walking distance of their home.
81. As pupil numbers increase, the majority of activity over the next five years will be focussed on ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand. Proposals to meet additional demand for school places will be considered in the following circumstances:
- There is a projected and sustained growth in demand which exceeds the availability of school places e.g. increases in birth rates or large housing developments;
 - Local schools are consistently over-subscribed;
 - An area has insufficient surplus to offer a choice to parents.
82. School enlargement proposals should be developed that are sensitive to the local community and neighbouring schools. In particular proposals:
- Should meet local needs and be geographically well located;

- Should be made in the knowledge that suitable accommodation or land for expansion is available and that schemes are affordable within the council's capital funding allocations and any additional funding secured;
- Should not cause detriment to neighbouring schools;
- Should focus wherever possible on schools judged good or better by Ofsted and should not cause detriment to school standards;
- Should not be detrimental to the organisation of teaching groups or make it difficult to comply with relevant health and safety considerations or class size limits.

83. Where additional places are required, the council will consider four courses of action:

- Stage 1 – determine, in discussion with the school/schools, if there are unused or underused spaces available. The council will look to see if a school's admission number can be increased without additional investment by utilising the building better or by converting community or resource spaces to classrooms. In some cases this may only be a short-term solution and further capital investment may need to follow.
- Stage 2 – where evidence suggests that the pressure is temporary, the use of temporary classrooms should be considered. At the point of introduction, a plan will be put in place for the removal of the temporary accommodation which will be revised on a regular basis with the school.
- Stage 3 – Where pressure for places is projected to be sustained and there is no alternative accommodation that could be easily converted, the council will seek to permanently increase capacity by adding permanent additional classrooms and facilities. A major consideration will be the availability of sufficient land on the existing school site(s).
- Stage 4 – Where pressure for places is projected to be sustained and there is no option to increase capacity within existing schools, consideration will be given to establishing a new school or establishing an additional school site for an existing school. In the event that a new school is required the council will work with providers to seek a new free school. A major consideration would be the availability of a suitable site.

Decreasing provision

84. Against the current background of increasing roll numbers it is not expected that the council will have to take action to remove surplus places in any schools. In addition, the DfE have reduced the emphasis on removing surplus places at schools and are no longer monitoring this.

85. Proposals to remove surplus places will be considered in the following cases:

- The amount of surplus in a school is significant i.e. more than 25% and there are other local schools with places;

- High levels of surplus or under subscription have been consistent and there is evidence that pupil numbers will not improve or will decline further;
 - A school's pupil numbers have fallen to the point where it is no longer viable to maintain it.
86. Reduction of places could be temporary or permanent. Where the problem is specific to one school and there are no implications for other schools in the locality, the council will seek to reduce the school's capacity and admission number by finding other uses for the unused school accommodation. This might include re-designating space for alternative uses e.g. community facilities or office space for co-located services, or re-using space for specific educational purposes such as for children with special educational needs.
87. Temporary accommodation will be removed as a matter of course and, where there is a projected sustained decrease in pupil numbers consideration could be given to removing permanent accommodation.
88. Where the over-provision of school places affects several schools, the council will seek an area-wide solution. Options to achieve such reorganisations will be limited as the greater number of schools are autonomous of the council. In the current climate, set against a background of increasing pupil numbers, it is unlikely that such measures would be considered unless at least one school has become so small that is difficult to maintain provision. In these circumstances it is likely that the school concerned, alongside the Regional School Commissioner, would need to give full approval for the council to intervene and be involved in every step of the planning.

School Standards

89. Where changes are proposed to the organisation or capacity of schools it will be necessary to ensure that these are undertaken in such a way as to avoid any situations which could have an adverse effect on school standards.
90. It must be accepted, however, that any changes to schools, especially those with a long implementation timescale, have the potential to disrupt the operation of those schools involved and have a detrimental impact on the quality of provision and education outcomes. Where such a risk exists, the council will work with the Head Teacher and governors to find solutions, which would mitigate any negative impact and seek to improve standards in the longer term.
91. It is recognised that schools need the flexibility to be able to plan for the use of resource spaces, shared areas and specialist facilities in order to deliver the curriculum effectively. While it is clear that schools value these spaces, these should be commensurate with the size and nature of the school and not excessive where there is pressure for school places.
92. Where school enlargements are considered necessary, the council will endeavour to ensure that these take place in schools which are judged by Ofsted to be good or better. Where all options have been exhausted, consideration will be given to

enlarging other schools where the failure to deliver further places would otherwise result in young people being out of school, whilst working intensively with the school to improve the quality of education.

DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

93. The development of plans and projects flowing from this strategy will be overseen by the Strategic Place Planning Group. Membership of the group includes the Council's Director of Education; Head of Access to Education; Strategic School Planning Manager; Director of Business, Performance and Change; Director of Regeneration and Director of Environment and Commercial Services.
94. The Council's role in delivering the strategy can be summarised as follows:
- Analysis of data and identification of trends and emerging issues and priorities;
 - The convener of partnerships, to identify options and opportunities for changing school provision to meet changing demand;
 - The champion of children and their families, ensuring that children have equality of educational opportunity.
95. Where capital solutions are required in council maintained schools, the council would normally expect to deliver these. Where capital investment is required in an academy, the school may choose to deliver works themselves with funding supplied by the council. On these occasions the council will put in place formal agreements about the level of funding and the outcomes required.
96. Similarly, where significant changes are proposed that require a formal approval process, the council will lead on these for maintained schools in partnership with the head teacher and governing body. Academies will be expected to take the lead in applying for a variation in their funding agreement.

Partnership Working

97. In developing options, the Council will treat all schools equally, regardless of type, governance or funding arrangements. While the Council retains some statutory powers to make changes to maintained schools, using them is not the preferred approach unless it is with the full agreement of the schools concerned. To do otherwise risks creating a two-tier system and jeopardising the positive and constructive relationships that the council enjoys with its schools.
98. In delivering the strategy Middlesbrough Council must therefore embrace its role as the commissioner, rather than the provider of school places. The council is reliant upon the cooperation of schools, their sponsors, partners and other education providers to meet the challenges of adapting to the ever-changing demographics of the town.

99. Engagement with these partners is a key element of the successful management of school places in Middlesbrough. The council will seek to engage all partners in the strategy and take into consideration their views before developing an action plan based upon the priorities identified. The involvement of head teachers, governors and trusts is crucial.
100. As the diversity of schools in Middlesbrough continues to increase and new partnerships develop, the council must seek to retain a holistic approach to place planning, developing a shared understanding of the issues and seeking a consensus on the actions required.
101. The key to a joint approach will be to build greater opportunities in which place planning issues and demographic pressures can be discussed. Providing relevant demographic and contextual information on the town and the planning areas. This must link with school-based decisions about admission limits and admission arrangements.

Funding

102. Middlesbrough Council completes annual returns to the DfE on the capacity of schools in the town and projections of student roll numbers. These, in turn, are used to calculate the council's Basic Need capital grant allocations.
103. The government announces Basic Need capital at most three years in advance. The purpose of this grant is to enable the council to provide new school places. Recently the DfE has also allocated local authorities Special Provision Fund capital intended to provide for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The council will seek to complement its capital grants with other sources wherever available, including contributions from schools and other government grants.
104. The Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan sets a strategic direction for the use of capital resources and identifies five key priorities for investment. Sufficiency of places is one of these key priorities.
105. Where necessary, investment in school buildings should complement the objectives of the Place Planning Strategy, endeavouring to address shortages or surpluses of places wherever possible.
106. Local authority schools are expected to liaise with the council, through Corporate Property Services, to fully understand the impact of school-funded schemes on capacity and therefore on the availability of places within the area. Schools should do nothing to their buildings which could have a detrimental effect on its capacity without first consulting the council.
107. Where there is a significant and urgent shortage of school places, capital funding should be prioritised to address these shortages. This should take precedence over addressing suitability issues and condition defects unless these cause a risk to health and safety or significantly affect the efficient education of pupils and school standards.

MAINTAINING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

108. Middlesbrough Council is responsible for reviewing the Place Planning Strategy. As a minimum this should be every five years or whenever there is a major policy change, shift in demographics, or significant announcement by government.
109. Annual updates will be made to the supporting documents to take account of any changes undertaken. This will include the relevant pupil forecasts and other demographic information, which will then be used to ensure that council's approach to managing places remains current and relevant.
110. The associated action plans stemming from this strategy and from the annual refresh of the demographic information will be monitored regularly in order to reflect the implementation of proposals and new initiatives by funding bodies.
111. Following each major review, the strategy will be the subject of consultation with schools and other partners and stakeholders.